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An Adventure In Terror

SKIPP & SPECTOR SPECIAL!

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- An In-depth Interview
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AN ADVENTURE IN TERROR

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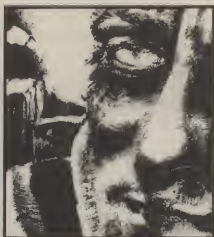
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THE HORROR SHOW

Fall 1988 Issue
Volume 6, Issue 3

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The Horror Show: An Adventure In Terror (ISSN: 0748-2914). Fall 1988. Volume 6, Issue 3. Published quarterly by Phantasm Press at 14848 Misty Springs Lane, Oak Run, CA 96069. Second Class Postage paid at the Oak Run, CA. Post Office. Editor: David B. Silva. U.S. Subscription Rates: \$14.00 per year. Postmaster Send Address Changes To: The Horror Show, 14848 Misty Springs Lane, Oak Run, CA 96069.

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HELLNOTES

DEAR FRIENDS:

I thought I'd give you a quick glance behind the scenes of last issue. It went something like this:

The magazine came back from the printers about a week later than I'd expected. There had been a mix-up with the shipping instructions, some problems with the size of the print run, and the usual things that can go wrong with an issue. But now it had arrived, via Peter's Trucking, and the problems were quickly forgotten.

I helped unload the issue, paid the driver, then carried a box into the house, and opened it. The magazine looked funny at first glance. I wasn't sure why, but something wasn't right. Something was out of proportion. Then I realized what it was: the masthead had been reduced, down to about 85% of full-size, just right for ugly.

The thought that came to mind was this: *maybe it isn't so bad*. But it was. And I knew that the fault was partially mine, because I went back to my letter to the printer and realized my instructions may have left room for interpretation. So that was it. I was sunk.

But then something else caught my attention, and I realized suddenly that it was worse than I'd first thought. I wasn't just sunk, I was at the bottom of the ocean, wearing concrete boots, and the last bubble of oxygen had just forced its way out of my lungs. Why? Because they had also left off the UPC code.

Oh Christ!

I put in an emergency call to the printers. Got through. Explained the problem. Heard that the magazines had already gone to the shipper, but they'd try to intercept them before they went further.

The rest of the story was like a nightmare. Four thousand copies had slipped through; the rest were called back. The printing company handled the situation in an admirably professional manner, and I will always be grateful to them for the way they took control of the problem and worked to rectify it. They agreed to reprint the covers, to contact those wholesalers and distributors whose copies had slipped through, and to try to turn everything around as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to recall all the copies. So, some of you have possession of an

issue that may eventually turn into a collector's item. The masthead is smaller. And there's no UPC code.

In the end, the issue went out three weeks late, and fewer than 2,000 bad copies escaped. It made for an agonizing experience. But I must now, publicly thank Alonzo Printing for their professional, cooperative response to the nightmare.

In Passing

Many of you have had the opportunity to read a copy of *Horrorstruck* over the last two years. In a very short time, it became an important contribution to the horror field, carrying regular columns by William F. Nolan, Bob Weinberg, Stanley Wiater, Bill Relling, Charles de Lint, and others. It was a highly informative, easily accessible look behind the scenes of the field. Unfortunately, the magazine ceases publication with its current issue. Paul F. Olson, Editor-in-Chief, put out one hell of a magazine and is moving on to bigger and better things. But before he goes, I want to wish him the best of luck, and let him know that *Horrorstruck* will surely be missed.

Special Thanks

A special thanks goes out to G.L. Raisor, who served as assistant editor this issue. It's an experience I'm sure he'll never forget. Last I heard (from his wife, Debbie), he was babbling incoherently.

Special Dedication

This one's for my mother, a lady who never ceases to amaze me with her laughter and her strength and her determination. Here's a quote from *Illusions* for you, Mom: "A cloud does not know why it moves in just such a direction and at such a speed; it feels an impulsion ... this is the place to go now. But the sky knows the reasons and the patterns behind all clouds, and you will know, too, when you lift yourself high enough to see beyond horizons."

Better weird than plastic,





The thing, slithering up through the space between the thin gray lips, grin shifting to grimace to wide oval gape, withered and greening musculature giving like a nylon-stockinged run.

COMPANY

JOHN SKIPP & CRAIG SPECTOR

A dank, musty breeze wafted up, filling Baker's nostrils with the odor of time and used kitty litter.

The TV was still running.

The TV was always running.

Baker regarded the basement warily, his conscience heavy with trepidation. They'll bitch, he thought. God, I hate it when they bitch. He pricked up his ears, hoping to catch them talking about him.

He knew they talked about him.

He waited a full fifteen seconds. Nothing. Nothing but the TV, droning on and on.

And their rasping, feeding sounds.

He descended the stairs. Softly. Slowly. Their hearing was not so terrific, he knew. There was a chance that they wouldn't catch on to his presence until he stood directly before them, the 19-inch screen that was their pipeline to the world safely ensconced behind his narrow jean-clad hips.

And in the time between, perhaps he would catch them in a moment of unguarded, Baker-related patter. It might be nice, it might be nasty; either way, it would put an end to his uncertainty, his skittering paramoia.

It was something that he longed for.

It was something that he never seemed to get.

"Oy, Murray!" came the familiar, high-pitched but no-less-keen whine. "On the order of the Red Sea's parting!"

"Or the Red Sox in '67!"

They cackled, horribly, as they

always did. Damn, Baker thought, abandoning stealth as he traversed the last of the steps and came to kneel, wearily, before them. I hate it when they kvetch.

The basement was dark and cool and dry, with only the blue light from the Zenith black-and-white to keep the shadows at bay. Rhonda and Murray sat facing the tube, looking shriveled

you!"

"In my way! In my way!" Murray bitched. His jaws worked spastically, lips cracking. Baker hustled away from the TV, freeing the sight-line. On the screen, Bachelor Number Three told his would-be date about the strangest thing he'd ever taken to bed.

"Sorry," Baker mumbled, then turned to Rhonda and added, "She'll be here in half an hour or so. Her name is Amanda."

Rhonda slurped in acknowledgment. "Amanda, eh? A shiksa?"

Baker reddened. "What do you care, shiksa? Beggars can't be choosers, you know."

"You watch your mouth, Mr. Smarty Pants!" Rhonda grumbled emphatically. "You think it's easy, sitting down here all the time with nothing but the television?"

"And network, no less?" Murray grumbled. "Whatever happened to cable? I want my MTV!"

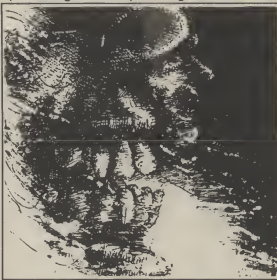
They cackled together, dry and unpleasant. Baker tried to imagine them, arguing over the Top Twenty Countdown. Favorite group? The Fat Boys, no question.

Somehow, the image failed to cheer him up.

"I don't understand what you want from me, anyway," he grouched.

Murray fixed him with his black, shrunken eyes. "You know perfectly well what we want, young man," he said.

"We want company."



and sallow in their over-stuffed chairs. They'd both been porkers, not all that long ago; now he than 160 pounds between them.

Rhonda, the elder, craned her neck around grotesquely. Her voice spilt forth from stiff and shrunken jaws, like the sound through a kid's old-fashioned tin-can telephone. Muffled. Distant. Cranky and desperate.

"Did anyone answer the ad?"

Baker hesitated. He wasn't entirely sure he could go through with it again.

"Well, did they?" She was adamant. "Peter, I'm talking to

Fun-loving Bi-White Male

seeks *LARGE M or F* for food, frolic ... romance. Any age, any race. Looks unimportant. *SIZE* is. All letters answered. Let's have fun! Box 3303.

When the doorbell rang, Peter Baker was ready. He'd hastily showered and shaved; the cumulative scent of Herbal Essence and English Leather wafted palpably about him, musky-green. The top four buttons of his clean white shirt were open, exposing the scraggly hairs embellishing his bone-protrusive chest. He was thin and short, with lime-green eyes, and there was an androgynous quality about him that was alternately off-setting and appealing.

Amanda Schneider, on the other hand, was Woman: cubed and magnified a thousandfold. She had tits like beach balls and hips like the Arc de Triumphe. Her eyes were blue, and her blond hair was a crabgrass afro that flattered her, not in the slightest. When she stepped into the living room, clutching the dog-eared personals column, the floorboards shuddered as if in mortal dread. There were 357 pounds of her, or so she said, and Baker did not think that she'd exaggerated.

He welcomed her in with a mock-warm grin and a glass of chablis, concealing his disgust as best he could. The actor within him was in primo form: if he'd told her that he wanted her ... right now, on the floor ... she could not have responded more effusively. Lonely-lust poured off of her in tidal waves: she had no friends, she had no family, she had no workaday compatriots who gave the tiniest dribble of piss about her (this he confirmed as he showed her the apartment, every bedroom and bath and closet-space).

He showed her the kitchen last. She found it stupendous.

The sharp things were plentiful, and easily at hand.

When the great thud resounded

throughout the house, Murray and Rhonda wrenched their necks toward the stairs as best they could. They could faintly hear Peter's grunts of exertion, the sound of something massive being dragged across the floor.

"Such a good boy," she said, gushing maternally.

"I knew he'd come through!" Murray added.

Rhonda slurped again, the sound of a straw hitting the bottom of a cup. "And not a moment too soon ...

"... this one's almost empty."

Black gimlet-eyes, sucking back from the sockets. The thing, slithering up through the space between the thin gray lips, grin shifting to grimace to wide oval gape, withered and greening musculature giving like a nylon-stockinging run.

First, the smooth and swamp-rock slimy forehead; next, the long and segmented stalks from which those eyes protruded; then, the whole of its flattened face, wide-nostriled and multi-fanged, leering fluorescently in the blue light from the screen.

The hands came next: tiny, flat-palmed, and scantily-clawed. They dug into the sagging cheek-wattles and hoisted the pear-shaped body outward. A pair of limp froggy legs railed behind, webbed and taloned feet weakly assisting.

The Rhonda-husk sagged back into itself and the old cushy chair that supported it, an empty feed-sack finally laid to rest. The long umbilical proboscis was last to emerge, trailing wetly down the corpse's cheek as the creature flopped into its lap, sucking air and staring feebly at the tope of the stairs ...

The basement was dark and cool and dry. It was just the way they liked it. The sub-cellar stanch, drifting up from where the others were limed and buried, scarcely tainted the aroma of the vessels still in use.

When the door creaked open with a sound like splintering

bone, the thing that called itself Murray forced its dead face into a smile. A fifteen-second spot for Baggies ("They lock in freshness!") gave way to Bob Eubanks and today's batch of newlyweds.

And at the top of the steps, Baker found himself thinking, they love me now. Of course they do.

But what would they do if I told them that, no, I couldn't go through with it again?

And what do they say about me when I'm not around to hear?

From below came the faint sound of jubilant whistling and tiny-flipper applause. He shrugged and grinned despite himself, then put his shoulders to the load and shoved.

357 pounds of Amanda Schneider came thundering down the steps and hit the bottom with a moist splutting thud. Baker followed, puffing and wheezing. Rhonda blew him a kiss, and he blushed, as always.

"Company!" he announced.



*Slowly, mindlessly meticulous, it licked itself clean.
Savoring the juices, the birthing sac.
It chewed carefully.*

THE WORD MADE FLESH

CRAIG SPECTOR

Darkness.

And within the darkness, movement.

The tissue-thin membrane of the pod split lengthwise, sending rich, amniotic fluid down in rivulets to seep into the spongy floor of the mound. The fissure widened, peeling back and disintegrating like a grotesque, lopsided grin.

And, from within, hands.

The naedel pulled itself upright, uncurling its sinewy arms, claws splaying reflexively. It sighed and stretched, long tongue flitting over many tiny teeth. The pod was already going soft, sloughing off in moist, ropy strands that settled into the ripe sludge around it.

Slowly, mindlessly meticulous, it licked itself clean. Savoring the juices, the birthing sac. It chewed carefully.

Garnering strength.

The naedel stared blankly at the contours of its nest: hardly what it had expected.

Not that it expected much.

Its brain was so tiny, a smooth and pallid lump of flesh perched firmly at the apex of its spinal cord, just behind the ocular nodes. As yet unblemished by thought.

It did not know where it was. It did not know *who* it was.

As it squinted out from the comforting murk of the mound, a solitary spark lit the whole of its mind. One thought, made flesh.

It rose.

Exploration came easily. The floor of the nest swept up and away from the birthing mound in a vast, rutted continuum: floors

into walls, walls into ceiling. The far end lay shrouded in shadow, the path cluttered with thick tendrils of the same spongy matter as that beneath its feet. Slime oozed from the porous surface, coating the tendrils and pooling in the runnels and depressions.

It advanced carefully. The floor gave underfoot, threatening with each step to pitch it face-first into the goo. It had gone



perhaps a half-dozen steps when a new element assailed it.

Sound.

A curious slurping noise filled its head. The naedel turned to see its birthing mound sliding unceremoniously into a black, puckering aperture which lay just behind it.

In seconds, it had disappeared entirely.

The naedel screamed, lips skinning back in terror. It had never heard its own scream; in many ways, that was more frightening than the presence of the hole. It scrambled across the interior, wildly hooking up great

divots of debris in its wake. As if on cue, the entire nest began to heave and undulate, pushing more and more matter toward the hole.

Everything was out of control. The hole was making hideous sucking noises. The walls exuded more slime, coating everything for the inexorable slide. The naedel whimpered and dug in at the farthest end of the nest. Its traction was steadily diminishing under a foul coating of mucus.

A deep rumble issued from the depths.

Beckoning.

The nest was upending, forcing everything into the hole. The naedel fought the temptation to slide back into the blackness. Its eyes rolled back in panic.

And it saw the other opening.

Another aperture, directly overhead. A tunnel.

Salvation.

It dug its claws firmly into the rim, and hoisting itself up

... the tunnel went berserk, closing on it like a moist rubber vice, crushing the life out of it. There was no going back. The naedel pushed forward, talons hooking desperately into the resilient surface of the tube. Hot fluid spurted from every new handhold, spraying its face and thorax and filling its mouth. It retched and pushed forward.

A new sound filled the darkness ahead, a shrill howling cadence. The naedel's ears pinned back against the onslaught. It pressed on, ripping viciously into the tissue ahead. The tunnel whipped back and forth violently, synching with a stinking rush of

bile that pushed up from below. It engulfed the naedel, stealing the air from its lungs, choking it.

And then suddenly, it stopped. The pressure receded. The tunnel lurched horribly back, the howling cut short. The walls relaxed their killing hold. Something gurgled, deep in the distance.

And the naedel froze, transfixed by what lay before it.

Something new. Something different.

Light.

Exploration came naturally. The naedel scurried up and out,

into its brave new world.

The Reverend Joe Bob Braggart had the crowd in the palm of his hand. Even the crew had rarely seen him so worked up; they'd barely been able to keep him on camera and in frame as he thrashed around the stage. Now he stood, back to the podium, head thrown high as his eyes gazed heavenward with mute appeal. He was a full thirty-seven minutes into his syndicated baby, *The Ol' Time Gospel Hour of Power Telethon*, and today he was

really on a roll, a flailin' and a wailin', yea, *filled* with the Spirit.

The audience was on the edge of their seats, riding the crest of his dramatic pause. The overhead camera pulled in for a close-up, as his lips peeled back in a grotesque, lopsided grin. Ten million righteous viewers hung in the balance, waiting for the payoff to this week's sermon, "The Demon Within." His mouth opened wide.

Hallelujah.



She started to flailing, in liquid slow motion: long hair and long limbs, wafting and waving in what bordered on grace.

A QUICKEE

JOHN SKIPP

Bright, wide-open and china-blue, her eyes were the first things they went for. Then she tried to scream, and her mouth parted wide, and a few of the larger ones rifled down her throat.

In less than a second, they had her name. *Barbara.*

She started to flailing, in liquid slow motion: long hair and long limbs, wafting and waving in what bordered on grace. She choked, and they went up her nose as well.

They listened to her panic: the only thoughts she had.

In less than three seconds, the poison began to take effect; her body, and all of its openings, went slack. They had open access to all the doorways in her skull, no restrictions on the tight gaps in her scant bikini bottoms, absolute liberty with all the portals of her flesh.

Her dying mind was numb and softly sinking, like her body. They listened, while her gentle tongues of memory lapped over them in waves ...

... and Larry was still looking at her like that, with those fuck-

me eyes and that connoisseur smile. And Bob was still back at the cottage, no doubt; suspecting everything, sure of nothing, trying to drag himself through a Mack Bolan novel that was over his head while her first bar room Romeo in fifteen years stripped down to his Speedos on the damp wooden planks ...

The blood was coming now, copious and thick, absorbed and concealed by the blackness that surrounded her.

They filled her brain. They filled her belly.

And just as her life began to flicker out entirely, they made her rise up from the depths.

It was dark, with only the half-moon's mellow light to shine upon them. The cottage-window gleamings from across the lake might just as well have been sent from the stars.

Larry wavered at the edge of the pier, looking down. The night was not warm, and the goosebumps that speckled his flesh were not entirely from anticipation. *An hour, on the outside, before hubby comes a-hunting, he*

mused, and she has to jump in the goddamn water. I can't believe it. She must want to get caught.

It was just stupid enough to be true. He didn't like it. She was gorgeous, yes. And hot to trot. But she wasn't worth fighting over.

None of them were.

He was thinking back to the bar, and the blonde he'd passed up on, when Barbara's head broke the surface. Backlit by the moon, her features were indistinguishable. He couldn't make out her toothy grin, the nipples she exposed to him with softly-kneading hands.

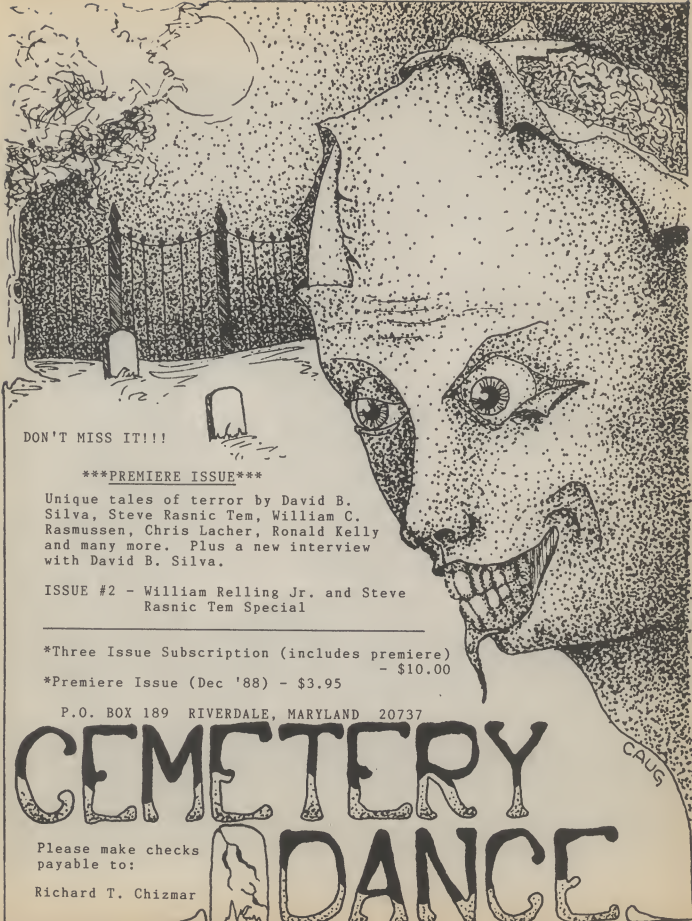
He couldn't see that her eyes were gone.

NO SWIMMING AFTER DARK read the signs that ran up and down the length of the beach. Larry deferred to the bulge in his Speedos.

"How's the water?" he asked.

And she said it was fine.





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Skipp And Spector's Answers To Twenty-One Questions
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JOHN SKIPP & CRAIG SPECTOR

THS: *What was your very first project together?*

SPECTOR: Our very first collaboration was back in 1973, when we were sixteen and fifteen, respectively. It was a song. Not just any song, mind you, but a Very Important Song: the kind that only fifteen and sixteen year-olds can really write, because only fifteen and sixteen year-olds really believe in them in the first place, and then only when both of their guitars are plugged into the same amplifier (with the reverb turned all the way up for the *sproingy* deep-space effect) and only after listening to too much Led Zeppelin, reading too many Heavy Metal comics, and ingesting too much of the kind of plant life that Nancy Reagan is often seen urging patriotic young people to just say no to.

SKIPP: God, that was a long time ago! Mexican dirtweed, fifteen per oh-zee ...

SPECTOR: It was called "The Madman," and it was a classic: about this vaguely Nordic tribe that's about to go off to war, all except for this one lunatic who sits on his little rock, gets high and stares off into space. And everyone makes fun of him, as they march off to glory. In the end, of course, they all wind up getting slaughtered, and the madman, the crazy one who wouldn't go, is the only one left ...

"The men lay dying, the women crying

The air is filled with pain.

But still, you'll find no glimpse of sadness

In the madman's brain.

The madman sits there, unaware

Of the dying of a race

And in the end, there's just the man so silent

With the madness in his ja-a-a-aace ..."

Pretty snappy, huh? Mercifully, the rest of the lyrics have long since disappeared, although snatches of them will still burble to the surface from time to time, usually when we're appearing in public and/or trying to be witty and intelligent-sounding, and even then the medication will usually keep it down.

Anyway, it took all of that Saturday night to write this epic, and by Sunday morning we were so pleased and proud and just plain slopping over with the fruits of our creative labors that we decided to take a walk through my neighborhood. Whereupon we were promptly stopped by the police, who found our walking through the neighborhood highly suspicious, if not downright criminal.

So they put us up against the side of the cruiser and then interrogated us until they were reasonably satisfied that there was no law on the books at that time specifically prohibiting a citizen from walking down the street of his/her own neighborhood, even

when they're underage. They eventually released us, with a stern warning *not to do this again*.

In retrospect, of course, we just said no.

SKIPP: Uh huh.

SPECTOR: And this was the first official project of our collaboration.

SKIPP: Our first literary collaboration came a few months later. It was a story called "Angelo's Angel of Mercy," which I had written for *Creepy* magazine. It was also my first professional rejection, though a very kindly one: the problem, they said, was that they only took scripts, and what I'd sent them was mere deathless prose.

Now, as all of you should know, Craig is a funny cartoonist. It was, in fact, a cartoon he drew to impress the cutest girl in school that instigated our friendship and sealed our fates (I was the only one in school who knew who Robert Crumb was, who could spot the influence). So what we did was, I gave Craig the story (which, coincidentally, was about a vampire junkie in the then-hippie haven of Georgetown), and he proceeded to illustrate it.

A couple of pages in, however, we got stoned and started working on another song, and that was the end of "Angelo." We wrote dozens of tunes together over the next several years, but never did another piece of fiction until *The Light at the End*, roughly eight years later.

SPECTOR: Coincidence? You decide.

THS: *What do you find most enjoyable about the process?*

SKIPP: Splitting the cost of beer. Saves money.

SPECTOR: I like telling people that we're really "Siamese writers," joined at the cerebral cortex. In fact, we want to have a special suit made--hopefully in time for our first David Letterman Show appearance--that will consist of a large leather jacket (with tweed patches on the elbows) that we can both fit into, John is right-handed and I'm left-handed, so we can sign autographs simultaneously. And because I'm a little taller, we'll have to pad out his shoulders to bring them level, which will give us a nice hunchbacked effect.

SKIPP: Actually, I like not having to work alone. Next to being Ed Meese, writing is the loneliest profession on earth. When you're disemboweling your hero at three in the morning, it's nice to have someone to call. Someone, ya know, who understands.

SPECTOR: Like Ed Meese.

SKIPP: Yeah. You and Ed, you're my safety net.

THS: *Least enjoyable?*

SPECTOR: Splitting the money. If we were one person, we'd be rich.

SKIPP: Plus, having people speculate as to who's the real genius and who's just along for the ride. For example, there was a rumor going around at one point that I was the talented one, and Craig was the responsible one. Which is really silly when you look at it. Craig's not all that responsible.

SPECTOR: And Skipp's not all that talented.

THS: *And the writing itself; how is this conducted?*

SKIPP & SPECTOR: Tag-team!!

SPECTOR: Yeah, the literary world has a great deal to learn from Championship Wrestling.

SKIPP: Just ask Dennis Etchison.

THS: *Are the novels carefully outlined, or do you find this too restricting?*

SPECTOR: Our outlines usually start off fairly detailed, getting fuzzier and fuzzier as we go, and generally end up with us saying to our publisher, "Trust us."

SKIPP: We use the ancient, time-honored technique favored by screenwriters and other primitive cultures: storyboarding. It comes down to shelling out for a couple packs of file cards, writing down headings for every scene we can imagine, then strewn them across the floor. Whatever order they come up in, that's how we write the book.

No, but seriously. When two people are working on one story, you have to have a framework. You need some formal, fixed idea of where the hell you're going. The key, as with everything else, is to not be slavish about it.

SPECTOR: Yeah, outlines are great, but we always try to find the pocket that the book wants to groove in, and that means remaining open to plot twists and changes that are sometimes impossible to see until you actually get there. In fact, the whole of "*Side Four - Raising Hell*" -- the climatic last section of *The Scream* -- was invented pretty much on the spot, over the course of four days. Four very hairy days, full of much excess stomach acid and very little sleep. Doom can be a wellspring of inspiration. We literally finished the first draft the morning it was due. It was even vaguely true to the original outline, which I believe said something to the effect of "... and then it blows up, and they slip away in the night."

THS: *How long do you spend writing a book together?*

SKIPP: It varies pretty wildly. *The Cleanup* took round about a year and a half; *The Scream* about a year. *Dead Lines* -- the latest -- was squeezed out of us quite literally in a whopping ten months' time. Of course, back in the good ol' days, we could spend a leisurely two years for something like *The Light at the End*, with intermittent breaks for starvation and attempted suicide.

SPECTOR: Yeah, time flies, boy. Those happy, carefree days. Our next book, *The Bridge*, will probably run about eighteen months or so, with intermittent breaks for anxiety attacks and contemplated suicide.

THS: *Have either of you written a solo novel, pseudonymous or otherwise?*

SKIPP: Actually, John Skipp is a pseudonym. My real name is Richard Bachman.

SPECTOR: Resuscitated by voodoo ...

SKIPP: Yup, yup. Fact is, I wrote a couple of books between '78 and '82, both of which are effectively part of the planet's buried history, never to be seen again. Every once in a while, a non-vomitous snippet from one or the other winds up in the real books. Other than that, fergit it.

SPECTOR: Actually, we exhume them for choice chunks from time to time: one scene from *The Real War* (Skipp's second "lost novel") provided a major inspiration for the epilogue of *The Cleanup*. It's weird; sometimes you get flashes of inspiration that it takes years to find the right place for. My very first short story ever appears in this very issue, albeit revamped to twice its original length. "*The Word Made Flesh*" was originally an 11th-grade English project. I turned it in a day late, and thus got a B+. To teach me a lesson, presumably. Thanks, Ms. Howells.

SKIPP: Yeah? Well, I wrote "A Quicke" in twenty minutes, cold, from initial inspiration to finished second draft. ('Course, I was twenty-eight years old at the time ...)

SPECTOR: And he still got a B+. For hygiene.

THS: *How did you come to write the novelization of *Fright Night*?*

SPECTOR: We came to run out of money. It was in the midst of working on *The Cleanup*, when we were still going through changes from being flat-broke messengers to Heap Big Big Time Writers, and it rather suddenly dawned on us that one big book deal does not thine fiscal security make. Luckily for us, Tor wanted us to do the book; so we paused in the middle of *The Cleanup*, and amid much wailing and gnashing of teeth, we banged that puppy out.

THS: *Was this a quick project?*

SKIPP: You betcha. And this leads us to a story that only now can be told.

See, we were given four weeks to write the sucker, and the deal was, we got half the money up front and half the money upon completion. Well, it took us five weeks (the first week was taken up going, "Damn! This is one stupid goddamn script!") And when we were done, we still had not received penny one. So we told our agent that we were done; we told the good people at Tor that we were done; we came to understand that it was Columbia Pictures, not Tor, that was holding out on the cash.

So our agent called Columbia and told them the book



was ready. They said, "Great! Give us the book, and we'll send your check." Adele Leone (our agent, with whom we are in love) said, "No, you don't understand. You send us all the money, and *then* you get the book." Which worked. And which just goes to show that writers need not knuckle under. We held the book for ransom, justly, and it felt mighty fine.

And the punchline on it was that a Columbia producer phoned us up to thank us, and to say that he wished we'd been in on the script revisions. He liked some of the things we did a good bit better than what wound up being shot.

THS: Which musical instruments do you play?

SKEIPP: Guitars, basses, enough synthesized keyboards to qualify us for a guest slot on a Thomas Dolby video ... plus we both sing and practice looking cool for the camera. Any camera. Even the Kodaks that you can't get film for anymore. The ones with the little cranks.

I also do some digital drum programming, which is a helluva lot easier than programming *real* drummers, which invariably involves throwing them raw meat stuffed with psychotropic substances, and I hate those little pre-moistened towelettes.

SKEIPP: Craig also plays a pretty mean blues harp. I play a pretty lame blues harp, but I'm workin' on it. On the other hand, you should hear my Bowie imitation.

THS: What sort of music do you perform together?

SKEIPP: Using digital samples of industrial clatter, bleating hogs, and other traditional musical noise, we've pioneered a new sound that we like to call "thrash polka."

SKEIPP: The video is going to feature lots of strapping young Aryan lads in *lederhosen*, which is German for "leather hoses," frolicking with pretty young *frauleins* sporting mohawks and chainsaws, all performing acts that are in gross violation of the Nur-

emberg Laws. Actually, the Nuremberg laws were pretty gross violations themselves. Actually, we *don't* really perform together. The only thing we ever actually perform anymore is the occasional drunken rendition of Skipp's "Pretend You Ain't Got Skin," or maybe "Rocky Raccoon."

The rest of the time we rely on Modern Multitrack Recording Technology, which means you never really even have to be in the same room with the other people you're working with, if it comes right down to it. Although you can scribble little notes to each other on Post-it pads and stick them to the Modern Recording Technology, so long as you clean up afterwards with a pre-moistened towelette.

THS: Have you done any recording?

SKEIPP: Yup. Oodles. We did the unheard soundtrack for *The Light at the End*, a number of unheard tunes for all the other books, an unheard commercial for *The Cleanup*, and some wonderful music for a cheap-ass film called *Tin Star Void* that they were too chintzy to pay for, so it will remain unheard. I recorded a couple of records in the late seventies that nobody's ever heard. God knows how many unheard tapes Craig has.

Right now, we're working on some music that you really oughtta hear. Hold your breath. We'll consider it a vote of confidence.

SKEIPP: You've got to figure that if record companies give deals to fashion models, and actors, and God knows who else, we've got a shot. I just heard a recording of William Shatner singing, "Hey, Mister Tambourine Man," for God's sake!

SKEIPP: And what about Leonard Nimoy? Ever hear him sing? Now *that's* a bone-chilling experience ...

SKEIPP: Sooner or late, somebody will see the hype value, if nothing else, and give us enough rope. We want to be functioning in as many art forms as we're capable of cutting it in. Hell, we'd ultimately like to do the "total" project write the story, and the screenplay based off it, and direct the sucker, and compose the score for the film, and write at least one of the video tie-ins, and even act in it. What the hell? We're shameless enough to give it a whack. Maybe we'll be lucky enough to pull it all together.

THS: What's the status of your various script projects?

SKEIPP: Aside from the long-awaited remake of *Zontar, the Thing from Venus*, you mean? One production company has optioned *The Light at the End*, and hopefully that will get the go-ahead, once the writer's strike ends. *Dead Lines* has also been optioned by another, and our agent got us first dibs on the script, and we might even direct. Other stuff, too. Some of it sounds awful nice. Some of it just smells like more Hollywood smoke up the ass: "Cine-enemas" we're calling them.

We do have an intrinsic commitment to making that big film leap, however. It's the one medium that does

it all: story, visuals, music. Some day soon, we swear to God.

SPECTOR: Clive Barker has been consistently in our corner, as far back as our first meeting at the WFC in Tucson, and keeps nudging us toward various projects. We keep looking for the one that'll do it, and we're still closing in.

We'll never give up writing novels and short stories, or even kick them into some kind of a secondary status--we love it too much. Plus the publishing industry is much more straight-ahead and a generally safer place to base -- less weasels per square centimeter.

But we find ourselves too drawn toward the media meltdown to not want to explore it more aggressively, to really put it to the test. We've been meeting a lot of genuinely inspiring people in the last couple of years, whose energy and commitment and integrity remind us over and over that there's no excuse for not doing what you believe in. I mean, if all the people who love a given art form don't get involved, the only ones who will be left doing it will be the weasels.

SKIPP: And while we're on the subject of weasels, here's a little story you might enjoy. It's the story of a tiny little man with a tiny little soul and a mouth as big as all outdoors.

As most of you probably already know, we spent some time this summer in Hollywood, working as hired guns on an sf/action/horror picture that needed some serious script-revision. This, of course, took place during the last weeks of the writers' strike, which meant that the climate there was midway between death-twitch and psychotic episode. Fortunately, it was a completely non-union production, which means that it had nothing to do with the strike.

However, the hero of this story didn't know this, nor did he bother to check. Evidently, it was easier to just get on the horn with everybody in the horror field except Craig and I, speculating out loud that we must be scabbing, and that, gee, isn't it horrible, Skipp and Spector's career in Hollywood will be ruined before it ever starts if this ever leaks out.

SPECTOR: Yeah, wotta pal, wotta true friend and all-around stand-up guy. He basically pitched us into twenty-fours of some high-octane agitation, as we fought off the completely unfounded hysteria fomenting around an essential non-incident. But you know how it is: some people regard innuendo as a form of foreplay. Fact is, if you know us at all you know we're not all that hard to track down at any given time, and one or two phone calls could have placed him directly in touch with us and thus put his tiny mind at ease. And anybody who knows us, knows we simply would not scab. Period.

And if we ever were crazy enough to do that, we sure wouldn't be lame enough to go to Hollywood openly, check into a hotel under our own fucking names, be seen in public with the people we were working with, and most importantly, let any scrap of this

kind of information go anywhere near that kind of dirt weasel.

Oh well, it's history now. But I wouldn't want him to be the one watching my back on a dark city street.

THS: Do you think the quality of horror has declined?

SKIPP & SPECTOR: What? Is this a trick question?!!

SPECTOR: With all the new blood that's hit the stands in the last few years? Actually, I guess that depends on what you think of all that new blood. God knows enough of a rift has developed between the so-called Old Farts and the Splatterpunks, aka the New Guys (actually, Chet Williamson said that he doesn't feel comfortable in either group, and is considering forming a "middle group" called the "Splatterfarts." Mmmm-boy! I keep seeing all these writers in yellow rain slickers with twed patches on the elbows, holding meetings in bad Mexican restaurants. "Pass the beans, Chet! I think the future of horror is PPFHHHT!").

Personally, I think that horror has never looked better, and I think the future bodes well. After all, friction makes fiction grow. The obvious polarization of the "old" and "new" schools has set up some real interesting parameters, and hopefully these will continue to expand as all sides are forced to examine their positions against the others, and as ever more "fresh blood" pours in.

SKIPP: Ha ha ha! My turn!

Actually, yes. With the laudable exceptions of F.W. Armstrong, T.M. Wright, Alan Rodgers, and Guy N. Smith, there hasn't been a decent work of horror fiction since *Varney the Vampire*. And as for movies, the limp-wristed advances of Bela "I Suck Sterno Through A Sock" Lugosi provide the absolute acme of cinema dread a standard against which all that follows can only be deemed a diminutive reflection ...

Pheh!

I'm sorry, man, but I'm confused. It all just seems awfully silly to me. There have always been dreadful writers, outnumbering the good ones by a thousand to one. Each generation produces guys and gals of vision and guts, some of whom manage to slug their way into the brainscape and posterity. Each generation brings its own truths to bear: not better or worse, but merely *the* truth as refracted through its time.

But I'm wearied immensely by retrograde thinking. When I hear a guy like Charley Grant suggest that there hasn't been a decent monster since *The Mummy*, I can only shake my head. Ronald Reagan wants to bring back the good old days, too. You can see how well it's working.

The point is, insofar as I can tell, to dig ever deeper, through the shit that hurts on down to the shit that really matters. As old-style politeness is stripped away, the opportunity to *get to the point* has never been so prime. Thank God for milestones of taboo-breakage like *Tropic of Cancer* on the one hand and *Dawn of the Dead* on the other. Thank God for our ability to see that which we're told we are not sup-

posed to; thank God for those who have the balls to show those things to others.

Thank God for fucking balls.

Yess! Anyone seen my sense of humor? I know it's around here somewhere ...

THS: Both *The Light at the End* and *The Cleanup* contained graphic violence. Is it important to present scenes of violence in as much detail as possible?

SPECTOR: Ah, fuckit, why eschew questions of morality? Let's go right for the throat. Or is it the spleen? Anyway, wherever the seat of morality currently is upon the body politic, let's go kick it around some.

There are at least two very good reasons for showing extremely detailed violence. One is that we like to show violence in extreme detail, and anyone who doesn't like it can suck my socks. The other reason is that well written, firmly grounded and purposefully rendered descriptions of *any* kind of intensity--be it good or bad--are gonna kick the titties off of a fuzzily-drawn, waffling intimations of intensity, every time.

This does not, however, boil down to some handy dandy equation wherein the more you pack in, the better you must be doing ... any more than the inverse would be true.

SKIPP: On the other hand, here's the equation I've been hearing from some of our more critical elder statesmen, so far as I understand it

Fast Pace + Lots of Action = No Imagination;

Slow Pace + No Action = Great Imagination.

Make of it what you will. We are not inclined to agree.

SPECTOR: The point here is clarity, which is not necessarily the same thing as explicitness. Harkening back to filmspeak, there are levels upon levels of details to choose from, and lots of ways to get it. There are distance shots and close-ups, macro-lenses and micros. There are the diffuse filters that you can put on a scene to soften the impact, and then there are filters that can make every hair, every drop of sweat jump right out at you, drawing a bead on the moment until you can practically hear the air molecules ramming into each other. They are all tools, and each has its time and place.

As far as I'm concerned, and all wheezing diatribe aside, the final arbiter must be the work itself. The work will tell you what it needs; from there, it's your job to supply it. If it's important to the scene to be excruciatingly explicit, then do it! On the other hand, if it's going to bog the scene down, or distract the reader from what you deem the primary focus, then do something else! Do whatever works. Do what gets your point across. Do what serves the word best. And if doing that bundles somebody else's undies, that's the price of having an opinion. With all due respect, fuck 'em.

As for the whole "moral anarchy" issue: that was a situation where a reviewer, who shall remain name-

less, confused our depiction of some amoral scumbag-rapist characters with a seeming endorsement of their behavior. Of course, we did use a sneaky technique, the one where you actually get into these characters' POV and show how they feel, *without judging them in the process*. And of course, *The Cleanup* is a sort of twisted morality play, about deciding what's right and wrong and all, and since we don't pretend to hold God-Given Absolute Answers to those kinds of questions, it's understandable that the reviewer, who shall remain nameless, could have gotten a tad confused.

Actually, John has since talked to him, back at the WFC in Nashville. I missed out on the conversation, which is probably a good thing, as at the time any conversation I would have engaged in would have probably involved polo mallets and reconstructive oral surgery. But they had a nice long talk, and apparently he was even looking forward to reading *The Scream*, and I have gotten rid of my polo mallet, and I can hardly wait for his next review. I have a cricket bat now ...

SKIPP: Yeah. Let's talk about this for a minute. The name of the article was "*Pieces of Meat: The Reader As Victim*". And a fascinating piece of work it was. It was the only review we've received that had me walking around the house, kicking the walls. And at the same time, it taught me something.

Because here was a guy who was completely derailed by the overt approach. He's a nice guy, and a bright guy; no question about it. And he has genuine love for the field. But he said some things in the course of the review that we think are worthy of noting.

He started with a rap about how "some horror fiction seduces its readers, deftly luring them across the boundary between the normal and the monstrous." Then, a couple of insulting paragraphs later, he got down to what was actually bothering him:

"But about halfway through the book," he says, "this frenzied energy is turned against the reader, in a seemingly endless scene where Billy psychically experiences the rape and disfigurement of a woman. This brutal, explicit sequence so far exceeds the limits of what is appropriate or necessary that it amounts to a violation of the reader. This scene, the most repellent I have ever read in a work of fiction, irrevocably rends the bond between authors and reader. The novel never recovers."

Now I know that a deftly seductive rape scene would have been a lot more fun. For some guys, anyway. But that's bullshit. That's the ugliest, vilest, most corrupt kind of soulless pandering. A rape scene that makes you even a little bit horny is like a maggot sandwich that makes you even a little bit hungry.

What we did in that scene was to *not pull away*: to not give the reader the out that they might well have desired. We wrote a rape scene that is as close to the experience as any I've seen (this is based on extended conversations with victims of rape, many of whom are among our closest friends, and whose confi-

dence we would be betraying if we were to play the experience down). The scene is not meant to be titillating. It is not meant to be jacked off to. It is meant to be utterly sickening and horrible. It is meant to put the reader in the victim's position, with all of its attendant screaming violation and revulsion.

Because when you're getting raped, there is no out. There is no merciful fade to black. You're there until they're through with you, for every excruciating nightmare second; and then you're still there after they leave. Unless they murder you, too, your life *from then on* is poisoned by it, until the day you die or somehow manage to heal yourself.

In a situation like that, seduction is utterly beside the point. And from our perspective -- from the way in which we see our job -- making rape -- or, for that matter, and more to the point, horror -- an EZ-listening experience for the reader is the province of cowards and geeks. When the reviewer throws out the words "appropriate or necessary," what he's really saying is, "OW! That *hurt!* How could you *do* that to me?" And when he says, "The novel never recovers," he's really saying that *he* never recovered.

Sorry, man, Didn't mean to hurtcha. But then, on the other hand ... well, actually, we did. Sorry you couldn't take it.

SPECTOR: Yeah, that review was one sterling example of not just pushing somebody's buttons, but stomping up and down on their whole damned control panel! The deluxe reviewer meltdown effect. It was great! His response was so passionate, so bile-filled and vitriolic, that he's lucky they don't have to seal him in cement for a hundred years, until his half-life decays below the established toxicity level. Or at least put a spittle guard on him. I can't say I enjoyed seeing something we worked so hard on get sliced n' diced like that, but I'm glad we provoked such an intense reaction.

Because when you get right down to it, few things in life are more stimulating than challenging life's cozy little moralities, turning them on their heads and occasionally kicking the stuffing out of them. I mean, if you profess to a penchant for horror and you're not willing to genuinely confront the morality of evil, you're in the wrong fucking business, bub! Time to take up historical romances, or some other gainful employment.

And sometimes, in the discourse, you may even have to deal with the *amoral* of evil. Which, as we all know, is practically an invitation for moral anarchy. But if you've been paying attention to the bulk of the twentieth century, at the very least, you'll notice that nine out of ten fiends agree: amoral evil is the evil of choice. And moral anarchy is better than no anarchy at all.

THS: Do you think the genre will evolve into something more visionary, surreal?

SPECTOR: If enough surreal, visionary writers start

publishing, I'd say it's a cinch. Otherwise, who knows? Many people don't even *believe* in evolution. We might have to organize a prayer and ask God to send us some more surreal, visionary writers. Or maybe we could take the jawbone of an Old Fart, and some skin shavings off of a Splatterpunk, and genesplice them together to concoct a whole new genre of visionary surrealists. We could call them "Piltown's Writer," and apply for a grant.

Seriously, though ... Charley Grant said an interesting thing to me at the party following the HWA awards. I even think he was serious. He said, "Do you realize how many rock n' roll horror novels have come out since you guys published *The Scream*?" He told me a number; I think it was four. Then he said something to the effect of "Jeez ... I keep waiting for this thing to go away!"

He might have been kidding; I don't know Charley well enough to tell. He seemed genuinely perplexed, though, enough so that I felt compelled to speak the sad truth, as I know it.

"It's never gonna go away, Charley," sez I. "Like anything else, it'll have its time as a fad, which'll pass. Some of the people involved will find it their niche and keep on cranking it out forever. The rest will move on to other things. And then we can look forward to the next wave ... to the mutants."

"But any way you look at it, it's here to stay."

Thus was my future as the Amazing Kreskin assured. We grew up reading King, and Poe, and Lovecraft and Bradbury and Goldman and Ellison and Vonnegut and Burroughs and whoever else touched us, or inspired us, or otherwise influenced our styles. We responded accordingly. Last week, we got a letter from a fifteen year-old from Alabama who claimed he read *The Scream* and loved it to pieces. I talked to a couple of young writers at the HWA party who were really great to talk to, because they weren't jaded yet. They still burned for their vision. It fired me up. And I'm really looking forward to what kind of little mutants come up in the face of our warpage, and what new writers may be influenced by some element of what we do.

Because ultimately, the field will do whatever the people who propel it--the readers, writers, editors, and publishers--will it to do. Nothing less. Perhaps a great deal more.

SKIPP: Assuming that there will always be generational differences, I only hope that, in twenty or thirty years from now, I take the time to find out what the new guys are really *about* before I start tinkling on their heads.

And if I find out that I really *do* despise that next generation's work, then I hope I have the balls to confront them openly on it.

Just to wrap this unpleasant digression: I was watching *Rebel Without a Cause* yesterday, and you know what hit me? The bit where James Dean tells the

continued on page 20

"A lot of it is over the edge, but that's okay. I'm a firm believer in overkill. It doesn't make for good philosophy, but it's great for entertainment." The Cleanup, page 100

EXTREME MEASURES

The Fiction of John Skipp & Craig Spector

R. S. HADJI

Consider overkill as an art form. Seriously. Because to appreciate the fiction of John Skipp and Craig Spector, you begin by discarding any preconceived notions of "acceptable limits" to contemporary horror. And open yourself to a vision of reality that is more flexible, and more extreme, than formulas can comfortably contain. Not that either of these gentlemen ever intended to write stories that are comfortable or contained. Spector puts it succinctly: "I want people to be upset by what I write." And indeed people are, fans and critics alike, making Skipp and Spector among the most controversial, and challenging writers working in the horror genre today.

Their visceral, aggressive approach to the material assaults all comers with its manic energy and brutal honesty. Skipp and Spector are young writers still and carry their brash insolence with ease, not studied pose. Primarily, they wish to entertain, but entertain by provocation: push buttons, ring alarms, whatever it takes to get a reaction. Like them, hate them, but pay attention. They are rarely dull, and much too talented to be dismissed simply as *schlock-meisters* pandering to abattoir appetites. Beneath, and within, the busy surface of their prose, these rude boys have more on their minds than splatter matter. The new dark days are here, and they want everyone to pay attention. Even if it hurts.

In a genre where the weight of tradition presses hard on its practitioners, sometimes extreme measures are needed to lift this mortmain. As when Skipp and Spector loosed Rudy Pasko on the Romantic conceits of vampirism in *The Light at the End* (1986). Nothing like a blowtorch to clear away the cobwebs. For these writers, it is a given that the raw content of contemporary horror must be contemporary horrors, from the street, not from the shelf. They themselves admire writers such as Ellison and King, populist mavericks who write with passion and do not shy away from the unpalatable when required.

It is, however, the mass culture of our times, of which the print medium is but a part, that comprehensively informs and inspires the works of Skipp and Spector. In the background loom the socio-political specters that haunt us all: the nuclear threat, the urban nightmare, the erosion of personal freedoms, the Vietnam aftermath. Out of the pervasive cultural mulch Warner Bros. cartoons ("What's up, Doc?"), underground comix, splatter films and rock music all

exert a decisive shaping influence on these writers. Particularly rock music. Products, and reflections, of the times, these elements are emergent not only in theme and content, but in form and technique.

Not surprisingly for a couple of hard rockers, Skipp and Spector share a good ear for cadenced prose, laying down a fast, urgent beat that carries the reader headlong down a torrent of words. These natural rhythms preserve their rough edges, the "wild notes," emphasizing spontaneity and passion over literary polish. This is not quiet horror, refined to capture mood in subtle shadings and modulations; it is *loud* horror, loud and rude and in your face. Literate, yet not literary in tone, and immediately arresting to the eye and ear. For Skipp and Spector, momentum and dissonance are the critical elements of style:

"The first through the gap became flame, became smoke, became madness and hate and rage. They tainted the adrenal-in-charged moment like a mega-dose of impure speed: amping the panic, poisoning the fury."

The presentation of imagery is an integral part of their rapid pacing, as graphic sensory impressions are densely packed into terse staccato bursts of prose. The result is a surface texture that is bristling with detail and intensely active. In a word, relentless.

Their literary technique acknowledges cinematic effects in the use of jump cuts, zoom-ins, hyperblips and abrupt shifts in perspective. Not to mention flashbacks and dream sequences. But then Skipp and Spector are aspiring filmmakers as well as writers and musicians, and have synthesized various media into a contiguous vocabulary. It is applied to striking effect in *The Scream* (1988), producing a kaleidoscopic *gestalt* of the senses riding to crescendo in the incarnation of the demon. Printed rather than pressed as a two-record set, this Wagnerian rock-opera is orchestrated for sonority, analogous to the DIOS process whereby Jesse translates vital energies into sonic. These are songs of dissonance and apocalypse, on the edge of the millennium.

THEIR FICTION

An overview of Skipp and Spector's fiction to date reveals patterns of rapid growth and change in just five short years. Each successive work broadens the

range of a world-view that has become increasingly ambiguous, expansive and mutable, stretching to accommodate rising ambitions.

Their short stories, whether collaboratively or solo, share common virtues: lean and precise, they focus on single themes which will recur, more fully developed, in the novels. For example, the ghost cabbie in "The Long Ride" (1982) and the psychic death-dealer in "Got To Sleep" (1983) are urban vigilantes, their supernatural powers wielded in judgment of street scum. In "Shells" (1986) the Big Voice of omnipresent war calls the lost children to perform the rituals, make the sacrifices that will vouchsafe their ravaged future. Momma, in *The Scream*, also calls the innocent to destruction. The stories as a whole are intimate in tone, with a concentrated pathos and irony often lost in the tumult of the novels. Scale determines form. To borrow a musical analogy, these are chamber pieces, whereas the novels are symphonic.

Skipp and Spector's first novel, *The Light at the End*, is brash, brutal and vastly entertaining, a wild ride through the underside of Manhattan. Simply put, it's Dracula brought up to date and accelerated, with the death eroticism stripped away to reveal the ugly hungry void beneath. The true face of vampirism. Moral conflict remains basic, good versus evil, unquestioned by the protagonists throughout the hurtling pursuit of their quarry. *Light's* complexities can also be found in the psychological probity of the characterizations. Their credibility gives paper the solidity of flesh, making the pain real and the physical grossness of the horror genuinely disturbing.

These strengths are reiterated in *The Cleanup* (1987), a more audacious work embracing visions of moral dilemmas here on earth. It is far darker, and brighter, than its predecessor, and a brief comparison of the two will prove illuminating as they are thematically a matched set.

In each, by means of a *deus ex machina*, ordinary men are endowed with extraordinary powers; Rudy for evil, Billy for what he supposes to be good. While the substance of reality distorts under supernatural pressures, their essential humanity proves irreducible and determines their common fate. Rudy was vampiric in life, a user and a poseur; undead, he still cannot transcend his limitations and his petulant spree of carnage sweeps him inexorably to destruction. Billy desires good, but being unable to comprehend the prominence of evil, his innocence and ignorance draw him to the evil inherent in absolute power. Inevitably, his cleanup must finish at it's source. But unlike Rudy, in the end Billy understands *why*, and his death is a sacrifice of love. If men are not gods it's just as well, for "there is order in chaos, a dark hierarchy of power" whose emissaries, "Grampa Death" in *Light*, Christopher in *Cleanup*, are unhuman monsters, utterly heartless and the more terrible for that lack.

The Cleanup covers a broad agenda, concerned not only with moral absolutes but with questions of individual responsibility, particularly in the areas of social decay and sexual politics. Skipp and Spector are more than happy to venture where angels fear to tread, burrowing through personal hells or appalling brutality only to emerge at the end awash in celestial light, the affirmation of life confirmed in birth. These jarring extremes are presented in all sincerity, calling into question not only the limits of horror fiction, but its purpose.

Their *magnum opus* to date is *The Scream*, a sprawling chaotic apocalyptic blow-out so charged with tension and bristling with tangents it threatens at times to fly off in all directions. It is that rarity, a horror novel of ideas, in which excess is not an end in itself but a means to an end. Freedom of choice is at issue, here, that and creative expression, the right to life, religious belief and war guilt, addressed from multiple viewpoints.

To their credit, Skipp and Spector refrain from providing the 'right' answers. Or 'left.' They practice what they preach and leave all options open. Even assholes get their say. A rueful irony nestles in the defense of "murder music" by committed rockers like Jake Hamer, in that their worthy colleagues *The Scream* are in fact evil incarnate, Pat Robertson's worst nightmare live on stage. Then again the televangelist Furniss stands exposed as a sanctimonious hypocrite, only to be redeemed through divine intercession in the person of a girl touched by the living Christ. And why not? Skipp and Spector are those same men who dedicated *Light* to "The Creator, who gives us the Light by which we more clearly see the Darkness." And meant every word. Their God is a god of ambiguity and contradiction, and His covenant is personal.

The power of the word, and of the music, is implicit throughout *The Scream*. Who better than two musicians can appreciate the tremendous power of sound to shape the heart and mind? The primal scream of Momma begins as a demonic whisper called forth in the mass sacrifice of Vietnam, which has come home to bind a generation of lost children in chords of "postmetal cyber-thrash." A voice rising, seeking embodiment through *The Scream*. The idea made word, the word made flesh. That metaphor resonates throughout Skipp and Spector's work.

NATURAL RHYTHMS

The urban environment presented by Skipp and Spector is more than just a backdrop to the action, it is an integral part, feral and menacing and physically *there*. On and beneath the mean streets predators and victims are caught up in a modern *danse macabre* which these writers call "life on the food chain." The threat of violence is omnipresent and the resultant tension breeds humor and horror like maggots in dead meat. Such humor is, naturally enough, absurd, street-wise, irreverent, profane and mordant. By turns or all at once. As in this hard-boiled parody:

"His scrotum constricted like a slug under a magnifying glass."

Or the hearty "EYAAOW!" with which Screamer's regale their victims. The horror is always near, fast approaching. This can be profoundly disconcerting, more so in view of the relish with which it is presented:

"Her throat was a raw meat canyon, open to the point where the broken bone protruded like a drainage pipe, emptying its waste into the river of blood that had finally ceased to flow."

Skipp and Spector make us very aware of the frailty of flesh, but to what purpose? An adolescent urge to go for the gross-out? The writers argue that these shock tactics are designed to penetrate emotional blunting and resensitize people to their own mortality and to a whole range of sensory experience. This is not a question of taste but of perception. And yes, it is unabashed sensationalism; not to titillate or disgust, but to arouse genuine sensations. Violence is only part of the overall pattern, one discord among many.

Dissonance can be found throughout Skipp and Spector's writings, producing a seeming cacophony which actually represents the unharmonized music of life. Rather than impose an orderly world-view, they prefer to let natural rhythms shape the fiction, embracing variations, contradictions and ambiguities. This celebration of diversity at times threatens sensory overload and the energies released are so intense as to elevate their reality to what could be more accurately described as a *hyperreality*. The paranormal interpenetrates this heightened yet organic reality as a natural extension of the pattern. It acts as a catalyst as well, precipitating crises in which ordinary people are compelled to extraordinary behavior, in keeping with their situation. Faced with monsters and miracles, evasion becomes impossible anyway. The physical world is the battleground of flesh and spirit, and the supernatural is always manifestly embodied, not ethereal. Claws rip, teeth tear. As Skipp says: "It's not like TV ... it hurts. It's ugly." Skipp and Spector strive for what Huysmans, almost a century ago, called "a supernatural realism": chaotic yet solid, sensational yet moral without being authoritative. A world of infinite terrors and wonders, unexpurgated.

It becomes clear at this point that the underlying motivation in much of Skipp and Spector's fiction is more political than aesthetic. And that their politics are visceral, not to mention radical and subversive. This should surprise no one, as theirs is hardly a hidden agenda. Power, whether vested in individuals or institutions, is seen as intrinsically arbitrary and repressive. Petty evils fester, and left unchecked lead to the ovens of Auschwitz. In their works, you will never find a confirmation of *any* status quo. Skipp and Spector oppose all fixed self-referential systems at the base, namely the self. Horror applied as a political weapon agitates the

reader, probing sensitive areas, questioning taboos, awakening senses. And offering choices. Which is all part of being aware, and *paying attention*.

MORAL FOCUS

Given that their stance is subversive but clearly not amoral, where then within the ambiguities can one locate a moral focus? There are no absolutes, but relative positions can be discerned. Evil is negation, the cold hungry void. This void is not chaos, which is neutral and the natural (though far from steady) state of the cosmos. Good is creation, borne out by the significance of birth and of creative freedom. Skipp calls love "the root of all creation" and once declared his darkest fantasy was to be devoid of all feeling -- literally heartless. As beings from "the other side" are.

Within the individual the moral centre lies in the heart, of course. Humanism comes naturally enough to human beings, if they don't deny it, and characters can always choose to seek the good, in themselves and in the world. Evil chooses Billy Rowe, but he chooses good when he learns to recognize it. It's never too late: even Walker takes out Momma in the end. Hard choices, but that's life on the food chain.

Spector says: "Trust your heart, but make it worthy of that trust."

These writers are radical moralists, in a fine old tradition of Lenny Bruse and others who mentioned the unmentionables. They are passionately committed to kicking ass in service of a new kind of horror, one that grabs for the gut, the heart and the mind. One out of three isn't good enough: they want it all.

SPLATTERPUNK

Skipp and Spector, together with David J. Schow, Ray Garton and others, share a common attitude that rejects the artistic restraint of supernatural literature as an evasion, and opts instead for supernatural horror that is brutally explicit in language and content. In repressive times there are many precedents for such spontaneous eruptions in the arts: the original Gothics, for one. This new group, and its attitude, has acquired the generic label "splatterpunk," though in fact it denotes neither a school nor a style of writing, and if anything it represents and supports diversity in horror fiction. The "splatterpunk" attitude expresses, not merely reflects the times we live in, and if this is "sick" horror, the disease surely lies in the body politic.

The difference between quiet and loud horror has already been touched upon; within "splatterpunk" a further distinction can be made between cold and warm horror. Cold horror, exemplified by Clive Barker or David J. Schow, has an icy passion, hard-edged, detached and amoral. Warm horror, such as that of Skipp and Spector, is agitated and intense, written from the heart. Their work is often more than warm, it's *hot*.

BREAKING NEW GROUND

The generic barriers are crumbling, within popular fiction and throughout literature as a whole. An ever-increasing number of writers are developing hybrid forms or experimenting with literary form itself. As old prejudices fade, the works of Skipp and Spector seem less aberrant when viewed in this broader context. But no less extreme. They go for overkill because they are instinctive overreachers, prepared to risk failure in the attempt to embrace a spectrum of extremes. Not for them the safer, surer paths. The seeming lack of control in their fiction is, in fact, the order in chaos they refer to, a pattern of discords. They are knowingly dancing with the chaos, letting it inform the structure of their work.

Much of the controversy surrounding Skipp and Spector arises from willful misunderstanding, a rejection of their methods and attitudes. Beyond that, however, there remains a lingering question of artistic responsibility. Are these serious artists or two crazy guys out to raise hell? This article provides an affirmative answer in many parts, but a simpler one might be to ask: need there be a distinction? High art notions can be stultifying to creativity, more so when directed against a populist art form like horror fiction. Skipp and Spector have made a career of juggling contradictions and thus are serious and crazy, simultaneously, in complete earnest. They are not, however, fools; they will insist, in the name of creative freedom, on no taboos and open options, even unto the vilest depths. This is artistic responsibility: accepting the worst as the price of freedom.

Increasingly, Skipp and Spector are challenging limits not only on the graphic violence in contemporary horror, but on the emotional intensity as well. The controversial rape scene in *The Cleanup* is a case in point. While clearly not exploitive in tone, the sequence is deeply disturbing and painful to read, capturing the horrifying degradation of rape in minute detail. And it is absolutely essential to the story, for this trauma opens Billy to the evil in himself. But artistic license is specific to the needs of the work. The real issue here is the function of horror fiction: whether it exists merely to induce vicarious sensations of horror in the reader, without actual emotional pain, or whether it must confront the reader directly with the horrors of life, provoking a real sensation of horror that is genuinely upsetting. Should horror shelter readers, or expose them?

Skipp and Spector have clearly made their choice and pursue it further in the recent stories "Gentlemen" (1987) and "Film At Eleven" (1988), descending into a living nightmare of sexual abuse where love and hate are twisted beyond recognition, and only the pain remains. These are horrors that many readers, and writers, will avert their faces from. The old monsters are safely metaphoric and don't look back at you from the mirror. The real horrors were never the

work of monsters, but of human beings, and horror is most often a very human response to very human actions. That is ground zero for Skipp and Spector. Horror is where you find it, next door or out past the edge, but the writer has to bring it back and make the reader *feel* it. All of it.

"Nothing makes any kind of real sense at all until you embrace the irrational. And beyond that, the wildest extremes: the things more beautiful and monstrous than you ever dared imagine."

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SKIPP & SPECTOR INTERVIEW

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cop ("Chief" from *Get Smart*) that he can't respect his father because his father is a wimp, and he says, "I never wanna grow up to be like that." Fact is, you have to earn the respect of the next generation. Nobody ever won a war through bitter, parsimonious incomprehension.

THS: *What do fans think of Skipp & Spector? Do you get lots of mail from them?*

SPECTOR: Not nearly enough. C'mon out there, let's hear from you!

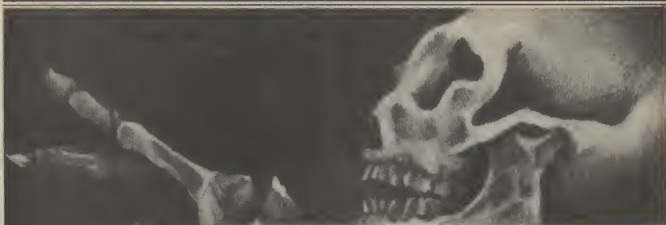
SKIPP: A lot of people seem to like us just fine. Of the maybe twenty-to-thirty letters we get a year, very rarely does someone try to chew on our asses. At conventions and bookstore signings, many a cheerful face comes up to tell us how much they liked the stuff. Sometimes it even gets gushy, which is embarrassing (mostly for them), but nice.

SPECTOR: Judging from the response, our readers' demographic cuts across all lines: geography, age, gender, social standing, everything. Well, maybe not *everything*. No royalty yet. We've gotten letters from as far away as Guam, from adult working women in Virginia and moderately militant gays in San Francisco, from mall bunnies in Silicone Valley to head-bangers in Jersey. Sick puppies are everywhere.

As for what they think of us: we don't get much hate mail, but then on the other hand we haven't seen any nude polaroids lately either, although we did sign some panties once, in Nashville. We got one pretty lurid offer from some underage girls in Richmond, but our response mentioned bondage and Jell-o, and we never heard from them again. And one kid in Connecticut swore, absolutely *swore*, that vampires were living near him and we were the only ones he could turn to. We never heard back from him, either, so maybe we've just crossed into a new fan demographic. Or maybe he went to Richmond. Nobody tells us anything.

SKIPP: The coolest thing to get from a reader is the

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And what horrified him most in the dreams was the way it followed him, walking. Like some horrible cartoon appendage --
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THE DANCING FOOT

AL SARRANTONIO

The stories had littered the newspapers for days -- YOUNG GIRL, PROMISING DANCER, PUSHED UNDER SUBWAY TRAIN -- and Lansing had collected them all, reveled in the large type of their headlines, relished his secret infamy. That the girl was dead did not matter to him; it was the fact that he had done something and gotten away with it, that an entire city wanted to get its hands on him but had no idea who he was that made him hug himself in satisfaction.

He sat smoking on his mattress in his apartment, remembering the crowded platform, the crush of the morning crowds piled four deep; then the roar and clatter of the oncoming train, the press of the mob toward the yellow safety line in anticipation; the train almost there; and then his foot, quick and silent, tripping the girl, causing her to fall over the edge of the platform in front of the metal beast, too late to stop; the scream of brakes mingled with the girl's startled, horrified cry --

Lansing rocked himself and smiled, lingering on the sweet moment of impact, thinking of how

he had glided silently away in the confusion after making sure to look down for a glimpse of the crushed body.

The papers had said that if she had fallen a few inches to the right she would have landed on the outside of the tracks and that her foot might still have been severed but that she would have survived. As it was, she landed directly under the train between the tracks, and her right foot had been cut off by the wheels, but her body had been dragged and crushed by the momentum of the front car screeching to a halt.

The papers had quieted down some about it in the past week, moving the stories and wild speculations to the inside pages, and though he had slept undisturbed for the first few days after the deed -- working a full day just as he always did -- he had begun to have bad dreams. He dreamed about the foot. He dreamed that the foot was following him. And what horrified him most in the dreams was the way it followed him, walking. Like some horrible cartoon appendage -- like the way his mother used to walk her hand around him with



little doll's shoes on two fingers when he was small, dancing those two little feet before him like a little soldier after he was bad and then suddenly lashing out when he wasn't expecting it, smacking him across the face with the flat part of her hand. She was doing it now, hitting him, smacking him --

He awoke, suddenly realizing that he had dozed off into the dream again. He was covered with cold sweat, and the room was dark now. He made a move to get off the bed and turn on the lights.

As he did so he heard a sound. He knew he was wide awake now, and he heard something moving around in the closet. Something walking around, pushing things aside, kicking things aside.

He thought, It has to be rats.

He pulled himself unsteadily from the bed, wiping the sweat from his face with the front of his t-shirt, and lurched over to the light switch. He clicked it on and the sounds from the closet abruptly stopped. He threw open the closet door and there was nothing there. No rats. Nothing.

He slammed the door roughly shut and went to the bed, settling onto the old, creaking mattress. He took a deep breath. I've got to stop this, he thought. He was starting to be afraid to go out, of taking the subway, of doing anything.

This has got to stop.

He thought again of tripping the girl, saw her falling off the platform, and that made him feel better. He looked at the clippings pasted to the wall around the room -- YOUNG DANCER CRUSHED -- and was even able to smile. I got away with it, he thought. No one knows I did it.

He lay down and slept.

And dreamt, screaming, of the foot again.

The next day he arrived at work late. Walking by a shoe store something made him hesitate; there was a pair of dancer's shoes, ballet slippers, in the window, and he found himself staring at them. As he looked they suddenly began to move --

He realized with a start of relief that it was just the shop owner, taking the pair of shoes off their hook to show a customer. But the image of the moving shoes lingered in his mind...

He didn't say hello to Joey, the lobby attendant, like he usually did, but went straight to the locker room and put his maintenance man's uniform on. Joey mumbled something as he went past, something like "Grouch," with a laugh, but Lansing let it pass.

Morelli was waiting for him on the 15th floor, and yelled at him good-naturedly when he came off the elevator, for being late.

"Look at this, kid," Morelli said suddenly, turning and holding up his right leg. "Look what I did shaving this morning." There was a stump on the end, no foot -- and then Morelli laughed and popped his shoe out of the pulled-down pants cuff.

"Got you that time, kid," he said, and laughed again. "Go clean up that mess on 18, the workmen'll be in early tomorrow to start. You okay, kiddo?"

"Uh, yeah, Nick," Lansing nodded curtly and left.

The eighteenth floor was completely gutted for renovation, and he went there gratefully, happy to be alone. But soon the emptiness of the floor and the strange shadows cast by the boxes and crates lying around began to get to him. He heard noises, and imagined a dancing foot, a legion of dancing feet, kicking things around, marching right up to him --

He swung around as the elevator door suddenly opened. Nobody got off. After a moment the doors closed again, and the arrival light over the opening went out. There was dusty silence for a moment, and then as Lansing turned to go back to work something moved.

He distinctly saw it, a severed foot scooting around a crate by the elevator, and out of sight. He began to shake and his body went numb, as if two giant icy hands had grabbed him. There was a scratching sound, and then the sound of a moving ballet slipper.

Lansing went rigid. The shuffling got louder, and then he saw a foot with a slipper on it appear from behind the crate.

Suddenly the elevator doors opened again, and the foot ran behind a box. Morelli stepped out into the room.

"Hey kid," he said, and then he saw Lansing standing frozen. "What's wrong?"

"The foot!" Lansing said.

"What?"

"Don't you hear the dancing?" He felt as if he would faint.

"Kid, go home early. Right now. Whatever's wrong, flush it out and come back tomorrow ready to work. I don't want a sick guy on the job, makes me look like a lousy foreman. Believe me, you don't look so good."

"I--" He nodded. "Okay."

He got in the most crowded subway car on the train and looked straight ahead all the way home. He was afraid that if he looked down he would see the foot in front of him. He thought he heard the rap-shuffle of it walking, but he refused to look. There was a light kick at the cuff of his pants just before his stop, but still he gritted his teeth and stared straight ahead.

He ran to his apartment and bolted the door, stuffing towels underneath the sill. He heard tiny footsteps outside. He slammed the windows shut, and double-locked the window leading to the fire escape, pulling down the shade. He sat on the bed in the corner of the room and pulled up his knees, closing his eyes tight.

There was the squeak-shuffle sound of a ballet slipper dancing.

He went to the window, sweating, and peeked out under the shade. An old man had set his hat on the ground in front of the building, and was doing a soft shoe dance.

Lansing yanked up the window and screamed at the old man, who quickly moved off. He pulled the window back down and went back to the bed.

Shutting his eyes, he tried to think of the girl and the train. But only the image of his mother came to him, dancing her hand in

front of him, waiting for his baby smile, then the fist --

Something was kicking around in the closet, and then the closet door opened.

The foot was in the room. Lansing opened his eyes and saw it skitter under the bed. It began to kick things around, moving shoes around, jumping up and kicking at the bottom of the mattress.

He screamed and stood quickly up as the foot leaped onto the bed. It disappeared under the covers; Lansing could see it moving around underneath them.

He pulled frantically at the bolts on the door, missing and then finally unlocking them. He threw open the door. He heard the rumple of bedclothes behind him, as the foot kicked the covers aside to follow him. He ran down into the street and toward the subway. Looking back once over his shoulder, he saw the foot walking leisurely, keeping up with him about a half a block behind.

He heard the soft shoe again. It was the old man; he had set his hat down by the subway entrance, and was dancing. Lansing ran past him, kicking the hat as he did so; the old man stopped his dance and yelled after him.

Desperate, Lansing jumped the turnstile, and turned back to see the foot running underneath it. He began to scream, and the startled crowd moved aside in a swath to let him pass. A transit cop, seeing him, began to follow.

He ran down the stairs two at a time to the lower level, and along the platform of the express track. The foot was behind him. There was a roaring in his ears; he looked back to see the transit cop in the distance, an express train coming in, and the foot a few feet behind him, taking great springing jumps into the air. He tried to duck as the foot leaped onto his back, kicking him over the edge of the platform onto the tracks in front of the train. He landed on his back between the two tracks. Wild with terror, he looked over to see the foot stamping at him, and with a convulsive effort he rolled over the track to his right

to safety as the train screeched toward him. But then, he realized with horror, the foot was stepping on his left leg, holding it down over the track, pressing it down as the train passed.

There was the shriek of steel on steel and then blackness.

He awoke in the hospital to the sound of Morelli's voice. The foreman was hovering over him.

"Thank God, he's coming around," Morelli said. "Hey kid, how you feel?"

"I ... okay, I guess," he replied. He tried to push himself up to a sitting position and discovered that there was nothing to push with on his left leg but a stump.

Morelli moved quickly to help him sit up. "Hey kid," he said, obvious concern in his voice, "I'm really sorry about what happened. I keep thinking about fooling you that day with my pants leg pulled down over my shoe and it makes me shiver. That didn't freak you out, did it?"

"No. No, I'll be all right," he said. "You were just kidding around. That had nothing to do with it."

Morelli looked relieved. "That's great. I was really worried about it. You know, you were really lucky, kid. There was a cop right there when it happened; he said if you hadn't moved at the last second you'd have been cut in half or mashed to a pulp. In fact, they might have been able to do something with your foot if ..."

Lansing immediately became alert with fear. "What happened to my foot?"

"They ... well, they couldn't find it. It's really weird."

Lansing said nothing; and then suddenly the vision of his apartment left open, with the clippings of the girl, sprang to his mind. "What happened to my apartment? I left it open--"

"Don't worry about it, kid. I locked it up for you. It was dark when I went over so I just shut the door. And don't worry about your job, either; I'll see you get it back when you get rehabilitat-

ed. There's no reason why you can't come back to work with ... the way you are."

Lansing's mind was racing. "Thanks, Nick. I mean it. I ... think I'd better rest now."

"Sure, kid," said Morelli. "I'll come back to see you tomorrow."

In the quiet of his room a sudden peace came over Lansing. It was incredible how it all fit so neatly together. He almost shivered with pleasure. He had killed the girl, and she had gotten her revenge; she was dead and he was alive. She had taken his foot, but he could live without it; he would learn to work and do everything else with it. And he would always have that secret knowledge of what he had done and that he had survived it. He began to smile to himself and drew his knees up, resting gently on the stump of his left leg, rocking slowly. I've beaten them, he thought, and even the image of his mother's fingers dancing before him didn't bother him now.

And then he heard the shuffling.

It was very faint at first, very far away, as if it were way down the corridor or outside his window on the street below, but it began to grow in volume. A cold shiver went through him, but then he suddenly remembered the dancing old man outside the subway station, only a few blocks away. He gradually relaxed. It must be someone like that -- maybe even the same old man -- shuffling up and down the halls of the hospital serenading the patients. He thought of how foolish he'd been before, letting it all get to him. It was not bad sounding, although it needed a little work on coordination. It got louder; obviously the dancer was working his way down the corridor and would reach his door in turn. He settled back against the pillows and thought of looking through his trouser pockets for loose change so that he could give it to the old man. He began to get a little drowsy.

The sound was very loud now; the dancer had reached his closed door

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It was up to the Buchler farm where I saw the two-headed calf. Them kinds of things happen once in a while to everybody, or so my Poppy told me afterwards, it's just how it is with cows sometimes ...

MOLE

SUSAN M. WATKINS

I want to say first off that my boss, he's a good man and wouldn't hurt nobody or nothing if he could help it. I been working here happy as can be near to twelve years now, ever since two days after I turned sixteen and my Poppy brought me down to Mister Ryan's farm, just before milking time, I remember, and got me the job. Poppy said to him, "Long as you don't give Joey no brain work to do, he'll be a good man for you, won't you, Joey?" and my Poppy and me laughed over that one. But I remember that Mister Ryan only looked steady at me and said, "What about school?" and my Poppy laughed some more and said, "Naw, Joey quit that soon as he could. He just wasn't cut out for the books, and they was mean to him about it, too, isn't that so, Joey?" and he said to Mister Ryan, "He's just dumb, and I guess that's all there is to it, but he'll be a good man for you, I guarantee it, or he'll catch it from me at home, and he knows it."

"I see," Mister Ryan said. "Can you milk cows?"

"He sure can," Poppy said, but Mister Ryan just kept lookin' at me and said, "I was talkin' to the boy."

"I can milk 'em," I said.

"Where'd you learn?" Mister Ryan asked me, and I said, "Up to Clovis Buchler's place part time," and Mister Ryan said, "They say if you can milk the Buchler witches you can milk anything," and I said, "They weren't so bad," 'cause they wasn't, only a little afraid of all they was, I said, and Mister Ryan seemed to think about that a minute and then he said, "Why, I guess you're hired, Joey Sommerson," and he handed me the fork and that was that. I

think my Poppy was a little bit surprised, too. He stood there while I went down the aisle and started picking out the dirty straw from under the cows and I heard him say again, "Just remember don't give him no brain work and he'll be fine!" and that was my first day working for my boss.

One thing about a job with the cows is that nothin's the same one day to the next. With fifty milkers like Mister Ryan's, and all the heifers comin' on and the calves and all, it seems like they got something different on their minds all the time, and you got to keep your eyes open. Sometimes a thing will be different about a cow and you don't know how you know it is, but like I said once to Mister Ryan, they can't talk so they got to show you with how they act or with how they look and you got to learn to see it. Mister Ryan liked to play a game with me, puttin' one over on me sometimes but never to be mean or nothin', just for fun, when he'd point to a cow, say like Black Eagle Rosey, an' ask me, "How pregnant is that cow?" And I'd look at her a minute and try to see her, like the way she was on her feet and in her eyes and this an' that, and sometimes I'd have to say I didn't think she was pregnant at all though at first I was scare'd to make Mister Ryan real mad by it. If a cow couldn't have calves all the time, he'd have to get rid of her, send her off on the truck, and he never wanted to do that. That's what I mean about him never wanting to hurt nothing. He sure thinks a lot of those cows. Sometimes when his wife, Miss Julie, comes out to the barn I can see she thinks a lot of them, too. It sure is a nice change from the

Buchler place, that I can tell you for sure.

It was up to the Buchler farm where I saw the two-headed calf. Them kinds of things happen once in a while to everybody, or so my Poppy told me afterwards, it's just how it is with cows sometimes, and people too, though you don't never hear about those 'cept in museums stuck away in jars and things, Poppy said. But anyway, that calf was born to an old cow that probably should have been sent to the auction long before. Mister Clovis said it was just a case of stuck twins, he called it, but I seen how the cow looked, and I thought somethin' else, but I didn't say. It weren't like they was two separate heads sticking out of one end, or anything. It had three eyes but the middle one was sort of shoved in sideways and jellied up like it was dead, and its nose went all crooked in the center like they was more bones inside than room for 'em, and it had four nose holes and a mouth that went around, see, instead of regular, and teeth all over the place inside.

Mister Clovis shot it right there in the box stall, and then he had me take it out with the spreader and bury it on the other end of the pasture. Next weekend the cow was gone, too. He just seemed madder than ever about things after that. I sure was glad to leave there and go with Mister Ryan.

But anyway, what I mean to say is that what happened in Mister Ryan's barn back in November could of happened anyplace. It wasn't nothin' he did wrong or like that. The cow, she was that nice big Apple Elevation Annie, the one that had twins the year before

that, so we knew she might do it again. We wasn't exactly looking for them, but we wasn't sorry about it. The thing is that twins is really only good for something when it's both heifer calves. If it's both bulls, then they just get raised up as steers or sent off on the next week's truck. If it's a bull calf and a heifer calf, then the heifer is no good. She can't grow up to have calves herself, or milk, see. I don't know why. I wonder sometimes, but it don't do no good to talk about it. They call that kind of heifer a free-martin. In the twelve years I been here, Mister Ryan's give me eight, ten bull twins for steers and five or six free-martins. I like those ones the best. They're just as tame as can be, always.

My Poppy, he can't work any more, he calls those free-martins his moo-dogs. He sets on the porch and calls to 'em and they come runnin' over for a pat. It sure is funny to watch those big black-and-whites come runnin' like a bunch of overgrown puppies. Sometimes I think they're the happiest animal I ever seen, even though they're supposed to end up on Poppy's dinner plate. Fact is, Poppy renders up the steers and keeps his moo-dogs to romp and be patted.

Anyway, I told Mister Ryan late summer last year that Apple Annie was actin' peculiar. "Like how, Joey?" he asked me, and I says, "Different," and he says, "How different?" and I tried to tell him what I'd been seein', though it weren't a thing there's words for, and I says, "She's been doin' it since April or May," and Mister Ryan says, "Doin' what, Joey? Are you gonna tell me or do I have to play Twenty Questions?" and I finally says, "Listenin', like."

"Listenin'?" Mister Ryan said. "Hell, that's what she's got ears for in the first place, isn't it?" And all I could say was, "She don't like what she's hearin', you watch." So Mister Ryan walks around by Annie's head and looks at her, and Annie rolls her big eyes and sticks her tongue up first her right and then her left

nose-hole and goes on with her hay, and Mister Ryan says, "Joey, you're full of it up to your eye-brows," but he kept lookin' at Annie and later I saw him push up against her sides and feelin' her ears and her big wet nose an' all. I could see I'd made him worried but I didn't know how else to put it, the thing about Apple Annie.

I saw it the first time early spring last year, half-way in April. I was doin' the milk chores while Mister Ryan was out plowing old ground. I finished laying down the feed and the strawbeds and opened the door to let the cows in. They come in by the order they peck out for themselves and walk right to their own stanchions, most of the time easy as pie. That day I 'member Apple Annie comin' in 'way back out of line for herself, blowing snot out her nose and bumping at her sides, like she itched or maybe a deer fly was a nag to her. Being as it was too early for deer flies I shoed her on into her place myself, where she stood just *lookin'*, side to side and back at me, flippin' her ears forward and back and stomping and snorting, all real nervous-like.

Then she'd all of a sudden come real still and stare off toward the wall in front of her with them ears of hers all stiff out, though there wasn't nothin' to hear. After a while, she just quit it and went on business as usual. I saw her do it other times, too. Once was when she was out in the pasture with all her sisters. None of the rest was payin' no mind to her or nothin' else.

Later on, Mister Ryan played that game with me, askin' how pregnant Annie cow was. I could see how many months it was, that was plain, but I didn't want to say. I don't know why. I said, "Who's their daddy?" and Mister Ryan says, "What do you mean, 'They'?" and so I says, "The twins in there," and Mister Ryan says, "Oh, you think she's going to have twins, do you?" And so I asked again, who was their daddy and Mister Ryan says, a new bull it was, from over to Pennsylvania way

somewheres, a bull named some fancy thing like Todd's Three Mile Goner, I don't know what it was. Mister Ryan laughed when he said it, like it was a joke. "I picked it out of the Holstein Sire Catalogue," he said. "I saw your picture in there, too, Joey, but you cost too much." He kidded me some more like he does but I didn't feel like it. So after a while he just let it go.

November came around that year like there was hell to pay for it and then some. First off, it rained steady all during corn chopping and we was stuck in the mud as much as we stayed out of it. The wind blew cold and hard and cut right through all the Carharts my Poppy made me put on mornings. Then I bet we broke a whole box full of them machine bolts trying to fill silo with the ensilage wet as it was. Mister Ryan caught cold, too, so Miss Julie brought a thermos of nice hot coffee out every afternoon during milk chores, but I could see he felt miserable as a rat in a hole no matter. That cold hung on him for a week or more, first time since I knowed him.

Maybe it was Mister Ryan's way of lettin' himself feel bad though, 'cause I know I sure was. Wasn't just because of the weather and all. Me and Mister Ryan sure have seen lots of wet corn chop-pin' and busted machine bolts, but we never felt so plain-fried bad over it before. A dread had come around the barn, was what it was. Poor Apple Annie just had the miseries something awful. She'd gone from that nervous listen-thing to bein' real kind of irritable and jumpy--even to kicking at us when we touched her, something she never done before--to somethin' worse. She was real blowed up, now, bein' due mid-month and all, and so you might 'spect her to dump along a little, but she was just--well, it was like she'd just turned into a bag of meat, was all. Just goin' through the motions of walkin' to her stanchion, it seemed like, and then she'd stand there and stare,

stare, nothin' else. She ate so pitiful small I thought she might turn to sticks, but she didn't, and that sure was funny too, when I think about it now. 'Bout the First, Mister Ryan put her in a nice clean box stall so she'd have room and all when her time came, but I was the one what fed her and shook out her straw and kept the chaff off of her water cup.

"Maybe I should give the Todd farm a call," was all Mister Ryan said about it, one day when we was getting down bales out of the mow, but anyone could see how it sat on his mind. The thing was, it was me knowed right away the morning she freshened, when I woke up flat out of a dream about it. Even though it weren't four o'clock yet and my Poppy was still asleep, I got up fast and dressed in the dark and went out the door. It's not but a couple miles between our house and Mister Ryan's and I walked it real quick rather than start the car up and have to rev it in the cold and wake Poppy.

It didn't take me long. I just knew I had to get in the barn before my boss did. I don't know why I knew that, I just did. There wasn't no light in the house or anything yet, so I walked right inside the barn and flipped on the overheads. Some of the cows jumped up and stared spewin' their manure, like they do. Chains rattled and stanchions banged as they all made their feet one by one. I paid no mind to 'em but went right around to the box stall. Maybe my dream had showed me what I was going to see, though I couldn't never remember afterwards.

Apple Annie was standing over in the corner, backed up on the stall slats and shakin' all over like she was sick. I could see an afterbirth hangin' out of her but it took me a minute to think to look for the calfs. I spotted the one right away. It was a fine-lookin' little bull calf on wobbly legs, big eyes blinkin' up at me with lashes like wheat grass, a fine youngster. There is nothing in this world so sweet as a newborn animal, and a calf most of all. I guess I get took up with it

every time and that's how come I missed the other one at first. The twin.

Yep, they was twins all right, like I knew they was, and the other one was sort of hidden under the straw banked up by the far slats. I went around to where I could pull the straw back and just as I kneeled and reached through I heard the door bang open and Mister Ryan come in. I picked the straw up off of the twin anyway, thinking probably it was dead since it sure wasn't standin' up like it should of been. He must of heard me gasp 'cause he stopped in his tracks by the corner of the stall.

"Well, Joey, what's the verdict?" he said, and I seen he weren't surprised I was there.

"Oh, Mister Ryan," I said, startin' down at it. "Please come look at it, please." I wanted to throw the straw down and run wash my hands in the milkhouse, but I didn't let myself. All there was under the straw was--was a lump, was all. A lump about the size a bed pillow makes, only softer, like it was some full up but not quite enough. And it had hide on it, black and white cow-hair hide, only no legs or head or ears or nothin' but just a lump and no more to it.

"A mole," Mister Ryan said from behind me. I forgot to drop the straw back onto it and I stood up. "A what?" I asked, thinking he'd said the word that means an animal in the ground, and he says, "A mole," and so that was the word after all, and I ask, "What's that mean?" and Mister Ryan explains that a mole is like a tumor that gets born from a cow sometimes and it's just dead tissue, is all. "Probably they started out twins and one died inside her and that's all that's left," Mister Ryan says. But he was swallowing and swallowing, and he stood with his hands stuffed hard down into his jacket pockets.

"Well, you got a nice bull anyways," I said by way of making him feel better, and we both looked down into the stall just in time to see the little calf blink up at

us and open his little mouth to bawl for his mama, 'cept it weren't a sound but something that I thought at first was one of them big goat-worms come out, and it fell down onto the straw, but it kept coming and unrolling, like, and crawlin' right through the straw toward Apple Annie back there in the dark corner.

I just couldn't move when I seen that. I near wet myself to hear that tongue thing slide and slide and to think where were it comin' from and comin' from? And just then it come to a stop for a second and the end of it poked up through that straw before it sunk back down in and then just about faster than fast, before the cow could make a sound, it was around behind her and *wrapping* itself up and up that twisted rope of afterbirth that hung out of her, up and up, and then up and sliding right inside of her like grease, and all without a sound but for Annie squealin' high up in her nose and tryin' to pull away but can't.

And all the time that tongue, it were just comin' and comin' out of that little bitty calf's mouth like there weren't no end to it inside, and then all at once Mister Ryan let out a shriek and threw himself back out in front of the stanchions where he bent over and went to pukin' his whole dern breakfast up right there in the gutter behind Round Oak Astronaut Nellie.

I come after him and stood there. I wasn't feelin' too good myself and there was sounds comin' now from in there I didn't want to follow by sight. Mister Ryan's heaves was pretty loud their own selves, which pleased me well enough.

"Boss," I said soon as he quit heavin' and pukin' a minute, "boss, what was that thing?" He only could shake his head. I guess I wasn't thinkin' he'd answer or anything. 'Course I knew we'd have to go back in by the stall and find out, and in a minute or two we did, me holdin' a pitchfork and Mister Ryan the long-handed manure shovel.

Apple Annie was laying in the

corner, looking her big dark eyes at us. She was clean of the after-birth, but if I thought about that I sure would of been pukin' up next to the boss' place so I real quick searched out the bull calf. He was starin' right back at us from the middle of the stall and to me he didn't look like no cute newborn baby no more. Nossir, he was straight and sturdy like a calf that's been fed his grain every day for a week. His legs were thick as my arm and his hide just gleamed and it weren't from new calf-wet, neither. Then he moved his head an' I seen it was like wood stove coals in his eyes, all red an' hot like they would of burned you to touch. Maybe that was reflectin' from somewheres off a mirror glass, 'cept there wasn't none in the barn I knowed of, and I heard my Boss give a wheeze out from his windpipe, real low, or maybe it was me doin' it, I don't recall.

"Mister Ryan," I started to say, well, what I started to say was that maybe I should go in there and kill it with the fork, but right then as I was tryin' to take a breath and even myself out a little, there was a rustle somewheres in the straw and that bull calf's head whipped toward it like a mouse trap wire snapping over.

"There it is again," Mister Ryan whispered, 'cause he'd heard it too--something movin' over in the other corner of that box stall. Prob'ly a cat, I said to myself, but I knew better. I don't know how. I stood there an' wished to god it could be a barn cat, or a mouse, or like that, besides what it was. I stepped closer and looked down over into the straw, and sure enough. The mole.

It was moving, all right, though it couldn't go nowhere. It was just laying there shivering, the way a dog shivers in its sleep when it's dreamin' about rabbits or whatever and twitches all over from inside out. Only the mole didn't have no legs or ears or anything, but it seemed to me as I looked at it that somewheres inside itself it wanted more'n anything to run out of there and get



away from this twin thing, like it could see the bull calf's eyes on it right then the same as I could and was terrible afraid. Then without making no other move, the bull calf opened up its mouth. This time the tongue not so much fell out as let itself down onto the straw and then just kept coming out and out and out and out and sliding smooth and purposefull over towards that twitching black and white lump like a snake through dry grass only worse than any snake ever thought of bein' or any body ever thought of one in their whole life.

And then the mole let out a sound you might hear from pigs when they go to slaughter, if you been careless with letting them know what's coming, a screamin' kind of whine from all over it at once, and a shudder that nearly picked the mole up off onto its side, and then all of a sudden I thought of the time my older

brother Timmy, he's been gone away five years now, put a litter of kittens into that feed bag and tied the end up to the exhaust on Poppy's car, and turned on the motor and let it run while those kittens struggled somethin' fierce in the bag and he wouldn't let me unloose 'em -- sat on me in the driveway whilst those kittens died. I was just a little kid then. I wasn't no more, though. I stepped quick around the corner of the stall and inside, and grabbed that mole up off the floor just ahead of the thing comin' under the straw.

I was outside that stall slammin' the door shut fast, but not before the calf let out a bellow I ain't never heard before or hope to again, and threw itself right into the stall slats at me as I was comin' back into the alleyway by the stanchions. Something whipped past my face and first I thought it was a wasp, stirred up by all the fuss, and then it went so close to my ear I could feel heat comin' from it and I realized it were that calf's tongue, or whatever you want to call it, snappin' out between the slats at me, goin' at me.

"Boss!" I hollered, though I don't rightly know why I did that, and before I could say another one, two, three, I saw my boss jump two-footed right over the stall side and land in there swingin' that manure shovel right up over his head. And the calf whirled at him and lashed that tongue through the air between them like a gun going off, and I'm not sure but that the calf only missed 'cause he been tryin' for me a second beforehand and was off his balance on the turnaround.

I don't know what woulda come about if it'd actually got us with that tongue. I don't think it's something anybody's supposed to know. I just don't.

"Die, you filthy thing!" Mister Ryan screamed, and he brought the shovel down on the calf's head withe very bit of his strength, and remember I seen my boss lift eighty-pound bales like they was cereal cakes, so I got some good

idea of how hard he must of hit that critter.

The calf dropped flat as a stone. Mister Ryan kept at it until its head was pretty well cut off and there was one good lot of blood around in there besides. In the end, when Mister Ryan was done and tryin' not to heave up again (though he did anyways, in some of the clean straw that was left in there), there weren't much recognizable about that bull calf at all.

Then it was I paid attention to the mole. I was holding it like you might hold a sack of feed under your arm. I guessed it must of weighted about twenty pounds and it was warm and I could feel it moving just ever so slight though there wasn't no nose in it for breathin' or like that. I patted it and thought it was soft as any new calf even been to my hand.

Mister Ryan was leadin' Annie cow out of the stall. She'd got herself up from the floor when the Boss started on the calf with the shovel. I looked close at her but it was like lookin' down into an empty old well.

"Go out and get the spreader around back of the barn," Mister Ryan was sayin', and I was shocked to see spit was in the corners of his mouth and on his chin. "I'll tie this cow in her place and then get the--the calf and what straw I can out through the window into the spreader and then you take it all up to the burning hole." I didn't move and Mister Ryan says, "I don't ever want the Missus to know anything about this, Joey, not ever, do you hear?" and I said, "All right," and Mister Ryan says, "Then get the spreader around there now and put a can of gasoline in the back with you, too." And I says okay, an' I goes and does it.

I burned that pile of bloody straw and what was left of the bull calf, all right, and Mister Ryan's jacket, which was all spattered up pretty good, and the shovel, too, which had got dented and splintered past use anyway. I thought for sure the town fire

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department would come runnin' out when they saw them flames go up, but nobody turned a hair about it. Miss Julie never asked about it either, far as I know.

Thing is, it were so cold and raw outside that mornin' that I put the mole inside my shirts, right up next to me there, as I went out to get the spreader and I guess I couldn't figure out how exactly to take it out of there and toss it on the fire once it got goin'. I mean, I had to use the fork on its twin 'cause there wasn't no way I was going to touch it, but it didn't seem right to do the same to a thing I'd gone to rescue and then patted afterwards.

After a while I made my decision and so didn't get back to the barn for an extra half-hour. Mister Ryan had the milk chores pretty well along by himself, but he didn't say a word about it then or since. After chores were done he pulled all the rest of that Todd Three Mile Farm semen out of the frozen tank, where all them different bull-sticks is stored, and mashed it to crumbs on the floor under his work boot.

Well, that were all goings-on of a winter and spring ago and so far as we ever heard, nothing like it happened nowhere else, or maybe

Mister Ryan was the only one to've bought that bull semen out of the catalogue. "Or maybe you was just the first one to use it yet," I said to him but he ain't wanted to talk about it, 'specially since what happened to Apple Annie.

She went out of the barn a week later with her sisters and never come back in. For most of a months we walked and drove tractor all over in the nasty rain and never did locate her until this March Second when I took the plow up to the hilltop acres and found her bones laying in a thornberry thicket. Well, found her by smell, if the truth be knowed. Most of her hide was left on her, so I knew for sure it was Annie.

That made me feel pretty bad. You don't never find full-grown cows crawled under something like a thornberry thicket, but she got under there and I guess she just layed down and stayed there til she died. From how she was that last week, I 'spect her heart was gone before she was. I didn't say how I knew that, mostly 'cause I was sore afraid for a while that Mister Ryan might come to feel the same way about it, but he never seemed to. Probly that was Miss Julie's being there, some to think of it.

Well, old Annie might of liked to know, if she could, how much my Poppy and me have took to one of her own. See I brung the mole home that day to Poppy, and after I got him to hold onto it a minute and hear the whole story he pretty much saw it like I do. Thing is, the mole is kind of more like them free-martins than it ever was like its little brother an' don't I know that for a fact. Why, you can pat the mole and it'll humpy-up back at you like with patting a cat but with none of the fuss, and sometimes it'll make this noise that can put you in mind of a purr, all nice like. It sets on Poppy's lap, too, and keeps him company not to mention warm all day long while I'm gone to chores.

"Best part is it don't eat nothin' or pester the hens or shit all over the yard," Poppy says. "Why, it's better'n the goddamn geese or any one of my worthless brothers ever was," and we sure do laugh good every time over that one, but I guess I'll just keep it between the two of us for now and see how it goes. It ain't one of them things that talkin' a lot about is going to change, one way or t'other.



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When The Lights Go Down

MICHAEL ARTHUR BETTS

.....	Superior
.....	Good
.....	Passable
.....	The stench of rotting flesh coming from an open grave!

Phantasm II	1988 Theater
Monkey Shines	1988 Theater
The Blob	1988 Theater

Nobody asked me, but since it still seems to be a big issue on talk shows, I'm going to add my input into the debate.

Colorization of black and white movies sucks! Maybe more so in horror than in any other genre. We're talking dark fantasy, shadows, things that go bump in the night. The old horror films like *Frankenstein*, *Wolfman*, and *The Mummy* have all kept their appeal for me partly because of the dark and shadowy lighting and photography. I can't imagine Karloff's Frankenstein monster in basic green.

I've got a copy of the colorized version of *Night of the Living Dead* in my film library, but it's there only as a curiosity. The movie was filmed in black and white for economic reasons, but had it originally been done in color, I don't think it would have been

shown anywhere. When I want to watch *Night of the Living Dead*, I take out the black and white version. If I want to see how art can be bastardized, I take out the color version.

My belief is that you don't screw around with art in the hope you'll reach a larger audience. Unfortunately, that's what is wrong with the entertainment industry. Money talks and art walks.

PHANTASM II

The original *Phantasm* came out around 1979, a period when horror movies were in a transitional stage. *Halloween* had been released the year before and *Friday The 13th* would follow the year after. The big budget horror movies of the 80s were still to come. A generation that grew up on Roger Corman quickies was still able to see the merits of a low-budget film like *Phantasm*.

Of course, the imaginative and sometimes nightmarish qualities of the film would probably be totally lost to much of the generation that grew up on *Elm Street* and camped out at Jason's lake. However, many of today's horror enthusiasts can appreciate the flying sphere that bores holes through human skulls. That little ball will always be *Phantasm's* claim to fame.

This sequel begins eight years after Mike (now

played by James Legros) and Reggie (Reggie Bannister, reprising his role) first encountered the infamous Tall Man. Angus Scrimm returns as the Tall Man (that's all he's called), a servant of evil who steals bodies, shrinks them and sends them into a weird other world where they are turned into slaves. In those eight years, Mike has been in a mental institution stubbornly insisting that all the strange things that happened to him were not just dreams. However, because of some psychic connections with a young woman, Mike decides to tell the psychiatrists what they want to hear. They release him, and he sets out to find the girl in his dreams, and once and for all to destroy the Tall Man.

There is an incredible amount of flash-forwarding, flash-backing, dream sequences, and plot turns that make this movie very hard to keep up with. Like the original, writer/director Don Coscarelli piques your interest with possibilities then slams the door on you, leaving you wondering just what the hell is going on. It might have worked somewhat in the original but I was looking forward to finding out a little more about who the Tall Man is and what the hell is going on. I imagine, for those who never saw the original, this sequel has to be mind boggling. The movie moves between Reg and Mike traveling from town to town looking for robbed graves, looking for the young psychic woman, Liz (Paula Irvine), and being terrorized by the Tall Man. I'm sorry, but after awhile I gave up and started doing what I'm sure many others in the audience did: waiting for the razor sharp ball from hell to appear.

Even on a lower budget, I think the original had a much dreamier quality to it. *Phantasm II* is not without visual excitement, and the ball is still a nifty idea. Used effectively when it shows up. Unfortunately, the overall film is much too muddled to be very entertaining. It's not a really bad movie, it's just not a very good one.



MONKEY SHINES

When I did a review of Stephen King's *Silver Bullet*, I remember mentioning that it would be nice if someone did a horror movie with a disabled person where the disability was secondary to the plot. As an example, I used George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* as the first time I'd ever seen a movie with a black character where the person's skin color was not even relevant to the picture. *Monkey Shines* is certainly one of the best movies I've seen where the disability is primary to the story but the character is totally human, not sub-human, not super-human, but human.

Monkey Shines is one of Romero's most gripping yet ungraphic horror films to date. Its main character is Allan Mann (Jason Beghe), a law student and athlete who is accidentally run over by a truck, leaving him paralyzed from the neck down. After his stay in the



hospital, he comes home to find his girlfriend has left him. He's stuck with an in-home nurse named Maryanne, who makes the Wicked Witch of the West look like Florence Nightingale.

Bitterness sets in, but soon he gets help from his friend, Geoffrey (John Pankow). Geoffrey donates one of his lab monkeys to Allan, after sending the little creature to a trainer, Melanie (Kate McNeil), who teaches the monkey how to assist Allan in becoming independent.

Allan, who is confined to an electric wheelchair that he operates through a mouth device, begins to feel more independent. Ella, the monkey, helps him turn pages, feeds and grooms him, etc. In fact, Ella seems to be incredibly bright and affectionate toward Allan. Quickly, a strange bond develops between them.

Now, obviously in lesser hands than Romero's this could have come off as the gimp and his chimp. However, this is not the case with *Monkey Shines*. As in many of Romero's films, the characters tend to be cliché. There is a domineering mother, mean nurse, unfeeling girlfriend, eccentric scientist. Yet he uses them to carry out his morality plays and give the audience characters that can easily be identified with, liked, disliked. The main character of Allan, however, is much more complex than the others. It has to be since it is really his frustrations and triumphs that make the movie work.

Jason Beghe does an incredible job using facial expressions, as most severely disabled have to in order to convey emotion. Beghe's performance coupled with Romero's brilliant use of camera angles makes you almost forget that Allan is paralyzed. The love scene that takes place between Allan and Melanie is as classy a piece of erotica as you'll see anywhere. The fast paced camera work during the psychic dream sequences, where Allan is inside the monkey's brain, are also excellent.

Admittedly, there are some holes in the plot. Yet, the suspense is great and the lack of graphic violence is refreshing. Definitely more is implied than seen. The biggest mistake, in this movie, occurs right before the credits go up. And the very end is not only a definite cop-out but also a slap in the face to the disabled community. I've heard that Ro-

mero was against the cop-out ending but the guys with the money wanted it that way. Regardless, it's unfortunate. What takes place up to that point is so intriguing and well done that I still highly recommend this film to those who want a movie that's more suspenseful than grotesque.



THE BLOB

The original *Blob* was one of those classic "B" movies that came out in the late fifties and remains a favorite to many baby boomer horror fans. It starred a then virtually unknown actor named Steve McQueen who, eventually, became one of the biggest superstars in film history. There was a very campy sequel called *Beware The Blob* (1972), directed by Larry Hagman, who also played a funny cameo role. Of course, Hagman later became a television superstar as a result of his character in the series *Dallas*.

This remake stars Matt Dillon's brother, Kevin. Will the luck of *The Blob* strike thrice and will Kevin Dillon become a future superstar? Hey, I look for any angle I can when I'm writing this column, so my prediction is: Kevin Dillon has as big a chance as any, but there are only so many Brando imitators that the public and I can handle.

Outside the small ski resort of Aborville, a meteor has landed. The landing is witnessed by an old man who collects cans and lives in the hills. The old man locates the space rock and starts picking at it with a stick. You guessed it, a slimy substance comes out and wraps around his arm, he panics.

A loner type biker, Brian Flagg (Kevin Dillon) is in the area practicing his motorcycle jumping. He comes upon the old man who is trying to chop off the slime with an ax.

Meanwhile, football hero, Paul Taylor (Donovan Leitch) and cheerleader, Meg Penny (Shawnee Smith) are out on their first date. While driving down the road, the old man suddenly jumps in front of their car. Brian, who has been chasing him, shows up. The three rush the old man to the hospital.

There the Blob consumes most of the old man and kills Paul. Brian, being an outcast, is blamed for what is going on and is arrested. Without sufficient evidence to hold him, Brian is released.

Meg, who was sent home after the hospital incident, sneaks away and finds Brian. Together they battle the killer Jell-O from outer space.

As in the original, at first nobody believes them, but the plot changes from the old horror theme of those parents against us teen-agers. Writer/director, Chuck Russel, who wrote the interesting mind thriller *Dreamscape* and directed *Nightmare II*, decided to go with another old sf/horror plot: the government against the people. It doesn't take hold, but the proceedings aren't necessarily destroyed by this tired plot turn.

Obviously, since special effects have grown since the 1958 version, the production values are more entertaining. The Blob itself reminds me of *The Thing* (Carpenter's version) and has become much more menacing than the old jelly slime ball of the 50s. The pacing is good. There's a re-doing of the movie theater scene, from the original, that is very well done. Kevin Dillon does seem to have a good screen presence about him, and, along with Shawnee Smith, they provide a believable and likable pair of heroes.

Nothing to write home about but enjoyable enough to sit through. The ending is kind of neat and reminds me a little of the ending of *The Man With The X-Ray Eyes*, another classic "B" movie of the 50s.



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SKIPP & SPECTOR INTERVIEW

(continued from page 20)

sense of having connected; of having reached a genuine understanding. It's the kind of thing that inspires loyalty. When that happens, it's the best.

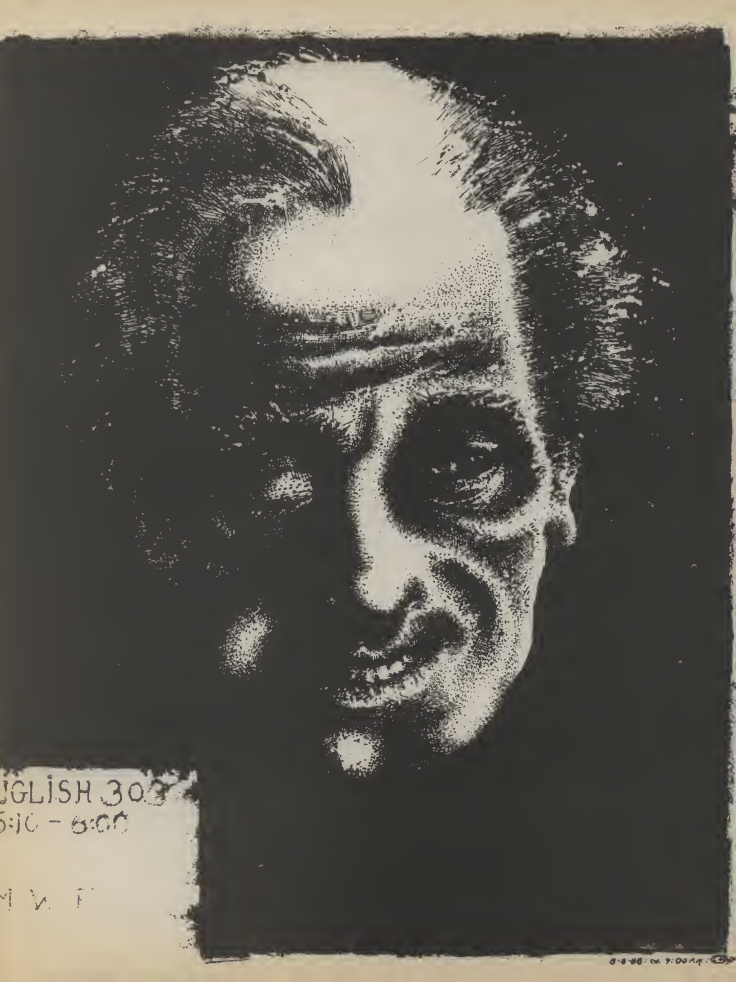
And right off-hand, can you think of anything worse than being misunderstood? Aside from physical torture, I mean?

THS: Do you plan to continue as collaborators?

SPECTOR: What, and spoil the suspense? Just when everyone figured out who was really the talented one? Sorry. You don't get off that easy.

SKIPP: I beg to differ. Yes, we will. Collaborating is fun. All you need is a true blood brother. If you don't have one, stab a stranger today.

And remember: if it ain't fun, why the hell are you doing it?



ENGLISH 303
5:10 - 6:00

M. W. F.

*Listening to his footsteps resounding in the receding grayness
of the empty hallway, he felt the place to be positively tomblike
at an hour like this ...*

ENGLISH 303

DONALD R. BURLESON

By the time he had erased the chalkboard and stuffed his books and papers into his briefcase, the last of the students had gone, letting the door fall to with a thud of finality: the week was over. With a sigh he pulled his overcoat on and took the briefcase from the battered desk. He stood and surveyed the untenanted seats. An empty classroom after a lecture always struck him as having an oddly melancholy air; unresolved questions hung echoing in the chalk-dusted twilight like remembered ghosts of birds; syntheses not welded tight and connections not quite made firm washed back to him silently like some frothy detritus in an ever-murmuring sea. One always had a haunting sense of incompleteness, as if the further truths were still cavoring somewhere out beyond reach mocking from some far shoal, glowing with an enigmatic smile that said: try as you may, the time comes to an end and you have always fallen short.

He stepped into the dusky hall and closed the door softly behind him. Well, in the first place it was a depressing time to have a class, 4:10 to 5:00, especially on a Friday. How it always fell to good old faithful Associate Professor Bernard Donaldson to assume the burden of Developmental English II at such a ghastly time, only the gods that preside over the mysteries of departmental administration could hope to fathom. Nancy had always disliked his getting home so late on the weekend, and he couldn't blame her; he gave enough of himself to the college and far too little to his family life as it was. But, he reflected, starting off toward the far end of the hall, somebody had

to do it. "Bonehead English," as some rather uncharitably termed it, was one of the givens of life, and the dean's office would assure you in solemn tones that time slots for classes were scarce. And anyway, a lot of people working out there in the real world got started for home later than this. But then they didn't all have to bring a load of work home with them; he had three sets of papers to read and correct by Monday.

Listening to his footsteps resounding in the receding grayness of the empty hallway, he felt the place to be positively tomblike at an hour like this; the early advent of the New England November evening made the hour seem even later than it was, and one would not have thought, looking at the unlighted classrooms lying dormant behind the inset panes of the doors, that they had ever known life. Somehow the hallway seemed too long, its wanly illumined farther end like the elusive goal to which you vainly attempt to draw closer in a lethargic cavern of dream. It had been a long and difficult week, after all, and he was beastly tired. The briefcase seemed a heavy burden in his hand, and his steps felt weighted and weary. The end of the hall was perhaps a metaphor for the end of the semester, which seemed sometimes rather to recede than to approach. The hallway, though, tonight, was more like a sluggish progress through some wordless rite of passage. Passage from what to what? he wondered.

But at length he came to the last classroom, 119, on the right, at the corner where the hallway veered to the right by the soda machines and led to the doors opening onto the lobby. As he

passed Room 119 and started to turn the corner toward the lobby, he slowed for a moment, noticing that there was light in the room; through the narrow pane in the door he could see the profiles of students in the seats. Odd, he thought; I never noticed a class in here at this hour before; don't tell me some poor wretch has a five-o'clock class--I didn't even know there were any five-o'clock classes on Friday. Maybe it's because it's darker earlier now and the light in there is more noticeable; but could it have been so different just last week when I went by? Shouldn't I have seen it then? So--it must be a special seminar or something.

But no. The administration here had the sometimes useful habit of posting on each classroom door a schedule of the classes regularly meeting in that room. He leaned closer to peer at the list Scotch-taped to the door, a dot-matrix printed sheet just legible in the wash of cold light from the soda machines, and there it was: 5:10-6:00 MWF, English 303. No name was given in the instructor column. English 303--what the hell course was that? He thought he knew all the course numbers in his own department by now. It was like encountering a word or a fact that he didn't know but others around him apparently did--you always asked yourself: what else am I ignorant of, what other unaccountable little gaps and lacunae are there, still waiting to surprise and embarrass me? How can I have missed such things?

Well--he straightened up and shifted the briefcase to the other hand and turned the corner toward the lobby, only to very nearly collide with a rather gonelike

and gray little man holding a bucket and a mop. Funny, he had never seen him around the building before, and his sense of yet another odd omission in his grasp on things increased when the little man broke into a gap-toothed and apologetic grin and addressed him by name.

"Oh, Doctor Donaldson. I didn't get a chance to clean your chalkboard. I was gonna but I got busy with a couple of other jobs. Sorry."

He knows my name and I never remember even having--and what is he talking about, anyway? "But my chalkboard was clean." He nodded toward the dark regions back up the hall where he had just come from.

The man shook his head, sloshing the soapy water in the bucket. "No, I mean this class." He pointed, with the mop, to the door marked 119. "This one coming up now." And he shrugged as if to say: I can't help it, I've put you to some inconvenience.

"But that's not--I mean, I don't have a--" A peculiar sense of confusion was growing in him. Why did the man think it was his class? Well, he thought, not so strange on the other hand--you can't expect the janitors to know whose classes are whose, and there isn't any name on the door for 510. He just thought it was mine because he saw me here. But still, how can I have walked by here every time for the past three, never seeing anybody around, if there's a class here? And he was sure he had never seen such a listing as English 303 in the catalogue, and certainly not on the semester schedule. You're really losing your grip when you can be unaware of--but the little

man was gesticulating once again with the stringy mop.

"Sorry if I put you out. It won't happen again. You have a good class now." And he was off up the hall, dissolving into the gloom, the mop tousled back and forth, the water sloshing farther off until it faded away.

Alone, he stood in the cheerless light from the soda machines and set the briefcase down with a click on the floor and ran a hand through his hair. He had a sense of disorientation that could scarcely be accounted for by events. So what, if somebody on the custodial staff thought that he--but what was this? His eye had strayed back to the class schedule on the door, and he snorted and looked away. No; there wasn't a name in the instructor column beside English 303. He had looked already, before, and there wasn't. The light was poor here. Silly to look again--you know it was blank.

Picking the briefcase up again, he hesitated. Maybe, he thought, those kids in there are waiting for somebody who isn't going to show up, or maybe they're in the wrong room, or there has been some mix-up about time. Shouldn't I--but licking his lips absently, he realized that he was very thirsty, and his eyes went to the water fountain at the end of the standing army of soda machines. Or maybe even a Diet Pepsi might be--no, first he'd better look in on the people in 119.

He opened the door and stood half in, half out of the room, casting an interrogative glance about. There were some fifteen or sixteen students here, and their response to his appearance startled him when he thought of it. Having expected them to look up and keep looking at him--as if to say: what are you doing here?--he was astonished to see that perhaps half of them glanced up in his direction for only a moment, then let their eyes drop again to their books and spiral notebooks; and the rest did not even bother to look up at all. It was the normal response that he had seen thousands of times, regular re-

sponse to the expected instructor's arrival. Normal, regular--except that now it was crazy. Or he was. Several of the students now were actually opening their notebooks and unlimbering their pens. He eased the rest of the way into the room and let the door close behind him. He couldn't just leave; whatever was going on here, he had to stay at least for the moment. He walked to the desk at the front of the room and cleared this throat. He would just ask--what? If this was his class? If it was he they were waiting for? If the class had been meeting all semester? God--how could he ask them that?

Before he could decide what to say, he saw that the rest of the notebooks were opening, the rest of the ball-point pens clicking into readiness. He glanced around at the faces. When you've been teaching a long time you get to feel that you've seen people before in replicate, seen all the facial types; sometimes he could swear that an old student acquaintance had returned to his class, only to find out that it was a younger brother or sister, or often someone unrelated. The feeling was stronger now than he had ever known it to be. Yet there was something, something else about these faces. They were familiar yet unfamiliar. Something--

"Doctor Donaldson?"

His attention snapped back and came to rest on a boy in the second row. "Yes?"

The boy indicated a large paperback book on the folding arm of his own chair, a book with a green cover. "Are you going to go over the reading assignment? I had some trouble with it."

He hadn't noticed the green book on everyone's desk, and strained to see the title without being obvious about it. He couldn't quite make it out, though the cover looked vaguely familiar. Without thinking what he was doing, he hoisted his briefcase onto the desk and snapped it open and threw the lid back. There it was, the green-covered volume: James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, atop

.... about the author

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the jumble of his other recently repacked books and papers. The *Wake*--"A way a lone a last a loved a long the riverrun"--that unfathomably brilliant but exasperating and outrageous cyclical work that he had never dreamed of trying to do in an undergraduate class; he knew scarcely anyone who had succeeded in reading any appreciable portion of it. What was it doing here? What was he doing here?

But there was no slipping out of the situation now. These people had been waiting for him, for God's sake--they implied that he had given them an assignment to read. He busied his hands, to conceal their nervous twitching, with unbuttoning and taking off his overcoat and draping it across the back of his chair. He would not sit down at the desk; somehow that was just too final an admission of--of what? That there had been a course running here all term, a course whose existence he hadn't been aware of, a course that he had been teaching nevertheless and had now, today, forgotten? It was one thing to get engrossed in something in the normal routine of things and forget the time, forget to go to a class; that had happened to him two or three times in the past. But it was quite something else to--he winced inwardly at the implications about his mental state.

Reluctantly, he pulled *Finnegans Wake* from his briefcase and held it as if it were fragile, unfamiliar. He didn't know what he could do but go along. "Can anyone refresh my memory as to what pages were assigned?" Were assigned: the classic dodge of responsibility implicit in the passive voice, that he had lectured about to students countless times. But how could he bear to say that he had assigned the reading?

A girl in the front row spoke up with page numbers. He smiled wanly and mumbled, "Thanks," looking at the clock on the left-hand wall; it said 5:20. What was he to do when he got out of here at six o'clock? Go home? Got to his

office first and go through his folders to see if he did have this class, had had it all semester? Check the college catalogue for the course number? Make guarded inquiries? Find a good psychiatrist? But for not all he could see was open his mouth and talk. That was what was clearly expected of him.

"As you know, when Joyce gave this work the mechanical aspect of a dream-narrative, he freed himself from the constraints of traditional logic in such a way that he could--and scarcely remembering, scarcely daring to remember, that it was unaccountable that he was here in this room at all, he let the words continue to spill and flow, and glanced around him at the faces while he spoke.

There was something odd about them, a corner of his mind observed. He looked from face to face, searching in vain for the source of the impression. This boy in the plaid shirt, that girl in the blue sweater, this one with rimless glasses, that one chewing gum, this one taking notes furiously, that one bothering only with an occasional scribble, this one closely following his words, that one looking distracted and only nominally interested--all familiar, all ordinary. But--something, something unplaceable. After a while as he continued to talk he glanced again at the wall clock: 5:46 already! Thank heaven; the home stretch, soon done. At least, even if he had plenty to think about afterward, at least then he could leave. Maybe Nancy could help him sort things out.

Talking on, and sometimes reading from the text, he rested his gaze at the center of the room. The students there were nodding politely, sometimes smiling, looking sometimes thoughtful, scratching at their notebooks. At the periphery of his vision, the boy at the front corner seat on the left had a long lupine snout. No, certainly not--preposterous impression, dispelled when he turned to glance directly at the boy. Damned fluorescent lighting in these rooms; he hadn't noticed

that the shades were all down. Was there a streetlight outside close enough to have any effect? As he kept speaking, he turned to his right and slipped the nearest shade up. No; only profound darkness beyond the panes.

Talking, he suddenly felt the air in the room close and stuffy. Without letting up the patter--why did he feel it so essential to keep talking?--he wandered back to the door and rattled the knob. Stuck. Surely not locked. Let one of these young turks open it when class was over. Through the narrow pane in the door came only darkness from the hall outside--not even the pallid glow of the soda machines. He returned to the desk, talking.

Focusing on the center of the room again as he spoke, he felt gradually more confused about his peripheral vision. The girl in the front row was opening her eyes wider and wider until they were huge, mucoid-white orbs too large for her face. He snapped his visual focus back to her: nothing, normal. The face of a boy farther back near the door was running down like melted rubber, a lumpy torrent like vomit. He whipped around to look at him directly; nothing. The girl's eyes were bugling again. He wouldn't glance again at her--nothing could be wrong. But looking back to the center of the room, with the feeling that something there changed back to the ordinary just in time, he soon had the clear sensation that there were concentric circles of peripheral faces eddying out like ripples in a pond, shifting just beyond his focal range.

It was 5:50 on the wall clock; he checked his digital watch on some impulse: 5:50. He talked louder, faster. Faces changed, he turned to confront them, found them normal. Faster, louder. His watch showed 5:52, the wall clock showed 5:52. Faster, talking on and on, saying anything--scraps of remembered articles of criticism, anything. Faces ran, metamorphosed, were normal when he

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*This is how it had been in life: she the happy spectator
as her son and husband lived their happy lives before her.*
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TWO

AL SARRANTONIO

Sometimes now, when a cup fell from a cupboard, or a book fell from its shelf, or a spoon hit a pan or the television snapped on loud, she suddenly heard the scream of brakes.

"Mom?"

He placed his knife on his fork, ever so gently, but the sound went through her like a fingernail down a blackboard.

"Yes, Tanny?" The voice was a practiced voice, not really her own. The practiced voice was calm; her own voice wanted to scream and scream like those brakes.

"My birthday--"

"I know, Tanny," and the practiced voice spoke a little too quickly, a little too loud.

He came close, a mop of dark amber hair over darkly serious eyes, and carefully opened a paper, putting it by her plate. *A boy without a father.* She wanted to touch him, but she was afraid that if she touched him, if she lay her hand on his head, he would fall to pieces and that when the pieces hit the floor she would hear the wail of locked brakes forever.

Oh Carl, why can't you be here for him again!

And then Tanny was gone, with the door to his room clicking gently shut (*scream!*) and the house grew winter cold around her.

That night, each night, she dreamed a dream. Sometimes it began with Tanny and Carl fishing on the short dock that jutted crookedly into the blue lake as she looked on. Sometimes she sat in a wooden-slatted beach chair and watched while Tanny and Carl flew a kite in the small meadow by the cabin, or while they rowed in aimless circles at the exact center of the lake while their

laughs, high and low and crystal clear over the water, reached her content ears. Sometimes Carl and Tanny were sitting at dinner in the cabin while she served them, a single candle orangely illuminating their faces for her. This is how it had been in life: she the happy spectator as her son and husband lived their happy lives before her. After one of these scenes, the rest of the dream was always the same. They were in their bright yellow station wagon -- Carl and Tanny in matching short-sleeved red and white checked sport shirts and she in a light blue dress. Carl drove, and they moved down the brown and green mountain like a drop of white wine down an upheld corkscrew. There was laughter in the car, Tanny's high laugh mixing with the low laughs of she and Carl. Tanny hit a camp pan with a spoon and he and Carl sang for her in the back seat. And then suddenly there was the scream of locked brakes, and then all the bright colors, green and brown and yellow and blue, turned bright red --

Oh Carl! she cried out, awakening; and his name, his face and his deep laugh were all mingled with the sound of locked and screaming brakes.

In the day she looked at her son and wanted to cry because his father was not there for him.

It was snowing when Tanny's birthday present came. It was unloaded by two men, tall, in coveralls and parkas, but they were gone nearly before they were there. The big box was opened and suddenly the truck was gone and Tanny was gone, leaving her stranded outside his closed bedroom door.

"Tanny?" her practiced voice said.

"Thanks, Mom." The voice was distant.

She began to speak again but then she went away.

Dinner sat and cooled, and after the time for patience came and went she knocked softly on his door. She heard a shuffling, the flick of a switch (*scream!*). She reached for the knob but suddenly he was there.

"Sorry," he said, and he rushed past to the dinner table, closing the bedroom door behind him.

There was a candle-flame in his eyes, a warmth that hadn't been there for a long time. It warned something in her, and for the first time in a long time the screaming went away.

"Tanny?"

He looked up, a startled deer.

Suddenly she didn't need the practiced voice.

"I ... know how hard it's been on your since ... the summer," she said, and as she said this the screaming tried to start again, way down at the bottom of her mind. "I ... I know how much you miss your father, how much fun you two had together. I know you miss all those places he used to bring you and the things he did for you. I know you miss the things he used to make, the puppets and the toys he brought home as a surprise, and the popcorn he made, and the surprises he always had. I ... wanted you ... to know that I ..."

She couldn't go on, and then her body was trembling all over and in her ears the sound, the high, tearing, locking sound ...

Beyond the screams that filled her ears she heard the soft click of a bedroom door.

In the night, after the dream

came and was gone and with it all its horrid sounds, as she lay breathing quietly again in the center of her large, sweat-soaked bed, she heard laughter. Tanny's voice was there, and another one, lower-pitched.

She held her breath and closed her eyes, and the voice didn't go away.

"And then we'll build a camp-fire," Tanny's voice said.

Muffled laughter.

"And then can we go to the movies?"

The other voice said something she couldn't hear, and then the two voices laughed again.

In bare cold feet she made her way to his room. Under the door were colors, red and green. As she threw open the door she suddenly remembered waking up in the hospital to see that Tanny was there but Carl wasn't. *I don't know how any of you got out alive, there was nothing we could do for your husband, we think the other driver was drunk, poor boy, growing up now with no father ...* She remembered the red and white checked sport shirt Tanny still had on, the torn sleeve on one arm, the v-shaped rip showing his bruised skin underneath, the blank, struck-animal look of loss in his eyes ...

"Tanny ..."

"Mom."

On the screen before him, as he hit a button, something red moved away into the distance, becoming haze.

"I was just playing a little bit."

She looked at the screen, at her son.

He held up a fat book of instruction meekly for her inspection. "You program in numbers and

..... about the author

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stuff and it ..." He looked down. "It makes someone for you to talk to."

She reached down to touch him and suddenly she was lost again, powerless, trembling.

"No, Tanny, it's ... all right. Go back to bed."

Oh, Carl!

All through the night she dreamed of Tanny and Carl together again, and in her wakeful moments the laughter and voices from Tanny's room came and went ...

In the morning, after Tanny's cocoa cup was drained and his snow-boots were buckled and his mittens dry and secure and his hood and books in place, after the yellow bus had gobbled him up (she always closed her eyes when this happened, listening for the snap of the closing door that would start the screaming in her ears), she went into his room.

She went in there to dust, she told herself. She went in to straighten up, to take all the empty boxes and string and paper stuffing from his birthday present away. She did all this, and more. She straightened the comic books and dusted his reading lamp; put his running sneakers and hiking boots back in the closet. She did all this, and then she stood before the machine.

It looked more of a mystery to her than it had the night before. Now, with its buttons unlit and cold, with its screen a cold green eye, it looked dead and yet somehow alive.

She touched a button and nothing happened.

She touched a green button, way off to the right, and winced at the sound of a flicking switch.

The screen went bright and something, a red shadow, was there, moving across the screen and then gone.

A boy without a father.

"Carl?" she whispered, and then she quickly touched the green button again, watching the screen turn dark, dead green, and hurried from the room.

The days and nights passed, and

the voices and laughter continued.

"Tanny, we have to talk."

"I'll be late for school, Mom."

"I'll drive you."

Over his oatmeal, he looked up. "You never drive," he said, and it was an accusation.

She said, very slowly and carefully, "I've heard you every night with your machine."

"Oh," Tanny said in a low voice.

"I want you to know it's all right as long as you don't carry it too far."

He looked as though he wanted to find a place in his oatmeal to hide. "Thanks."

"Tanny--" she started to say, wanting to tell him as her shivering began how much she wanted more than anything in the world to have his father back again so that she could watch the two of them and be happy, but he pushed away from the table, and was into his coat and out the door just as the bright yellow bus stopped to swallow him up.

In the long morning, at each tick of the hall clock and each creaking sigh of the big empty house settling around her, she sat in her chair and heard the imaginary screaming of brakes.

The world went round. White snow melted into gray slush, which melted into silver water, which melted into the warming earth. Green shoots, tender things with strong roots, shot up, along with white dandelions that waved in the wind and then exploded, sending themselves away. The sun burned warm yellow again. School boys grew thin, as winter mittens were packed into mothball boxes and hooded snowsuits turned, like midnight pumpkins, into canvas jackets with thin zippers.

The spring didn't warm or launch her, but found her wrapped all the more tightly in her cocoon. By day she wandered the house restlessly, straightening and then straightening again; by night she lay awake staring at a spot grown hers in the center of the darkened ceiling and listening to the laughter from Tanny's room. She tried to think

of Tanny and Carl together, but this only brought a chill to her bones. She never went into his room now; but sometimes, when the door lay open a crack or when he ran out to his bus, leaving it open, she would walk slowly past, as though in awe, and steal a look at the icy blank screen within. Carl. She and Tanny hardly spoke; their meals were silent eating times with only the setting out of plates beforehand and the cleaning of dishes afterwards to frame them. When the yellow bus disgorged him after school he went to his room, and when he finished his supper he went to his room again. On Sunday he stayed in his room all day. It finally came to her, through the thick, gauzy layers of her isolation, that his bond with the machine was becoming too strong.

"School will be over soon, Tanny," she said one Sunday, when the sunlight was so warm and close it seemed to heat the food on their plates.

He nodded distractedly.

"Would you like to go away for the summer, just you and me?"

He looked up, as if seeing her for the first time in a long while. "Where?" he said. There was discomfort in his voice, as if he wasn't sure he was really speaking with her.

She took a long slow breath, fighting the demons within her.

"We could go to the mountains." Again a measured, practiced breath. "To the cabin."

He looked at her so hard her composure began to crumble, but then she realized that he was trying to comprehend what she had said.

"You mean it?"

Fighting the paralysis that wanted to overtake her, she nodded, and tried to smile. "I thought we could fish, get the old boat out -- though we might have to work on it a bit to get it in shape."

"Really?" There was a trace of excitement in his voice; but it disappeared as he saw the suddenly terrified look on her face which she was unable to hide any longer.

"I guess not, Mom." Again he looked down at his plate, getting ready to dismiss her from his thoughts.

With great effort she froze a smile on her face.

"I really mean it, Tanny. Just like old times. I can watch while the two of you--"

She was unable to control herself then. The trembling began in her hands and soon her whole body was shaking. Then she was sobbing into her hands. She couldn't stop shaking, and the tears wouldn't stop. "The ... two ... of ... you ..." she sobbed.

When she did stop crying, and looked up to see that it was dark in the house and that the warm May

They ate their meals
at the same table but there
might well have been a wall of
brick down its center;
and, when he took
to leaving his meals uneaten,
to go back to his room,
putting a more material wall
between them,
she said nothing.

sun had gone away leaving only night, leaving her alone in a pool of darkness, she heard, down the hall from behind the closed door the sound of laughing voices, and she knew that now there really were two of them again.

May bloomed into June. The yellow bus drove quicker these days, hurrying toward the end of school and summer rest. The bus seemed almost angry, impatient for these last few school-days, these days of tests and short-sleeve shirts and the abrupt and rude opening of windows by shouting girls and boys calling to friends on the sidewalk, to be over.

She passed these mornings in the kitchen, at the table before her cold cup, or in the livingroom, sunk deep in a chair in the one dark corner where even spring and coming-summer had not penetrated.

She felt as if she were wasting away; as if, within her cocoon, the time for blooming had passed and now all that was left was slow and inevitable decay. Each day the cold chair swallowed more of her; and in her mind, as if she were chained to a seat in a movie theater, or strapped before Tanny's machine, she endlessly reviewed scenes of Tanny and Carl doing things together while she watched. Her nightmare became a constant day and night visitation which always ended with the same scene of blood and loss. She thought of Tanny recreating these same scenes with his father in front of his machine, and these thoughts made her even more helpless in the face of the mounting dread and weakness she felt.

Tanny avoided her. He walked from the room if he stumbled on her quiet, shade-like figure. They ate their meals at the same table but there might well have been a wall of brick down its center; and, when he took to leaving his meals uneaten, to go back to his room, putting a more material wall between them, she said nothing. Only her body spoke then, and the shuddering and the sobs it gave her filled her with nothing.

As the month wore on the noises from Tanny's room grew strangely quieter. Suddenly there was little of laughter from behind the closed door, only great frightening silences punctuated by sullen words of assent and approval. She wanted to move from her clinging bed when this happened, but her body would not let her.

When he came down to eat his silent breakfast on the last day of school something moved deep within her. There was something there, a small and violent flame that burned still in a place where there was no grief or fear, and it suddenly kindled and pushed her to action.

"Tanny," she said weakly, and she had to rise in painful stages from her living room chair. She could hear him in the kitchen, hurrying to finish, hurrying to be gone before she could face him.

"Tanny," she cried, and as she

stumbled to the hallway he was past her and out the front door, slamming it (*scream!*) behind him. She rushed to the window and as he stepped on the bright yellow bus he looked fleetingly back at her. There was an odd look, of surprise, almost, on his face, and something else strange about him ... And then the bus was gone.

For hours she hovered around his room like a lost bird. She tidied the room next to it; the room behind it. The rugs in the hallway she brushed and then vacuumed and then brushed again. The laundry closet across the way she cleaned from top to bottom. The chair in the living room beckoned but she blocked it from her mind, knowing that by what she was doing that tiny flame within her was pushing her toward the place she had to be.

Finally, late in the afternoon, she pushed open the door to Tanny's room.

The flame within her almost died at that moment. She fought to control the shivering that began with her hands, the thing that would destroy her and make her unable to go on. The room was ... different. There was no laughter left. There was a sense of defeat -- of death -- in the air. Suddenly she knew the worst that would happen, what the dread and chill and weakness of the past months had been leading her toward.

Please Carl, no.

She now saw that the machine was on.

As she closed the door behind her and turned, she saw its blinking Christmas-color display and her heart gave a skip as that *something*, that red formless shadow, moved back and away from her on the screen.

She moved closer, and the screen remained perfectly flat to her, glowing soft ruby.

Again the shadow moved toward her, away.

"Carl?" she said, barely controlling her voice. "Carl, can you speak to me?"

That shadow again, an outline with a dark nebulous center, there and gone.

"You have to talk with me!"

Leaning over, she hit a gem-like button.

Nothing happened, and she hit another and another.

The screen abruptly changed, showing an out-of-focus outline of a figure that wavered and then broke up into static.

"Carl, talk to me!"

The ruby screen returned. The shadow moved across from right leisurely to left, then disappeared.

Suddenly in her mind she saw Tanny get on the bright bus that morning again and she knew what had been strange about him: He was wearing his red and white checkered sport shirt, the one he had been wearing the day of the accident; in her mind's eyes she saw the torn fabric on the arm falling open as he stepped up into the bus, looking back at her with that odd look ...

She knew what Tanny was going to do. *A boy without a father.*

"Carl!"

She hit the gem-filled console with her fists.

The screen went gray, and then green, and then a shadow, as from down a long tunnel, moved closer to her and became large and then became defined. The edges filled in, replacing green with the hardness of bones. Around the bones wrapped muscle, and then the fine lines of vessels carrying pumping red blood, and then a fine taut layer of skin and clothing and fine features.

The figure began to laugh, a fine, low, melodious sound impregnated with sadness and sharing.

It was her own laugh, her own face.

"Well, Tanny," her own image said to her from the screen, the face she used to wear in the summer, the clothes the blue and yellow summer clothes she used to wear, the hair the fine fresh-washed and perfume smelling hair she used to have. "Have you thought any more about it? Do you still think this is what you have to do?" The figure gave out a warmth and an understanding that bathed the room.

The figure waited for an answer that didn't come.

"We'll talk about whatever you want," it went on, after a moment. "I know how lonely you feel. You know I try to help as much as I can. Though I may not know how to fix a bicycle very well, or how to make a puppet or put on a magic show, you know I'll try to help you with whatever you need." The figure brightened. "After all, now that your father is gone and there's only the two of us, we're all we've got, right?" Again the figure waited for an answer and then went on in a more soothing, infinitely sad tone. "Are you really sure you have to go back to your father? Aren't the two of us enough?"

Out in the street there was a sound, the stopping of a bus and then the unmistakable scream of locked brakes. She fell across the machine, her thin hands caressing it as though it was a child. She knew that someday someone would come, opening the door very quietly so as not to make the screaming start in her ears, not knowing that it was there always now, to find the two of them.



The Black List

WILLIAM J. GRABOWSKI



YELLOW FOG

Les Daniels

(Tor, \$3.95, 294 pgs. paperback)

I'm ashamed to say that I've till now never read any fiction by Les Daniels. (I have read his excellent nonfiction work, *Living in Fear*, which is about horror in film, but that doesn't excuse me.) I'm happy to report that, not only did I enjoy his *Yellow Fog*, but I intend to seek out all of his earlier -- and forthcoming -- novels.

A cover blurb by Stephen King very accurately (to me, anyway) describes Daniels' writing as "...dark but humane. His horror novels deserve a much wider audience." I couldn't agree more.

The story begins in England, 1835, as Horace Lamb, railroad

magnate, his daughter Felicia and wife, head toward London in one of the earliest steam locomotives. Felicia, frightened by the rattling train, imagines

... that she was sitting in a chair at home, but the chairs at home didn't rattle, and they didn't shake, and they didn't rush through the night at more than thirty miles an hour. For an instant she had a vision that something like that might happen, that her family's sturdy brick house might go roaring through the streets of London the way this train ran down its track, and the picture in her mind dismayed her so much that she was actually relieved when her father shattered the image with the sound of his voice.

"Wrought iron indeed!" he snorted. "Do you realize how much more that would have cost the company for 'every foot of rail we laid? Can't expect to make money if you throw it away, can you? Cast iron's good enough, no matter what they say. Iron is iron."

A point that is very quickly, violently, proven as the train hits a section of flawed rail and crashes.

The catastrophe, though occurring at night, does not go unnoticed:

And there was something overhead, a gargantuan shape whose vast wings beat against the blackness of the sky.

It had sensed the train before it heard the endless, roaring

crash, before the fires had flared as if a writhing serpent, plump with fat, had been tossed onto a bed of flaming coals ...

Here there was prey.

Felicia Lamb somehow survived the crash, and the creature -- assuming now the shape of a man -- pulls the girl from the fiery wreckage that has taken the lives of mother and father. Thinking herself dead, Felicia isn't shocked when the dark-haired man/angel suddenly gathers her up in his arms and soars into the night sky. The next morning Felicia is discovered, sleeping, on the doorstep of her father's home -- miles from the scene of the crash.

So begins her fascination with death and the occult.

Years later, Felicia is courted by Reginald Callendar who stands to inherit the home and fortune of his uncle William. Soon the old man dies; then Reginald learns what he is to inherit, which amounts to hardly anything. Luckily his future bride Felicia will be more than rich, as Reginald has no skills beyond drinking and gaming.

Then, Felicia and her aunt Penelope (who also is a believer in the occult) decide to visit a spiritualist called Sebastian Newcastle. Reginald will not permit this unless he himself accompanies the women. So he does.

At length, Newcastle abducts Felicia. And so she is reunited with something horrible (and wonderful) from her past. Reginald

must find his bride-to-be before the forces of darkness claim her soul.

Yellow Fog is a meticulously rendered period piece of vampirism, seances, gore, and genuine occult frights. And Daniel's shock ending will pierce your heart ... so to speak.

Don't miss the chance to wander through *Yellow Fog*.

MIRROR

Graham Masterton

(Tor, \$18.95, 448 pgs, hardcover)

The author of *Death Trance*, *The Manitou*, *The Djinn* and others has written his most graphic, surreal and chilling novel yet. I sat down with this book and, with the exception of pausing once to prepare coffee, didn't stop until I'd finished the read. How does Masterton keep one so totally immersed in the story?

To start, he builds a world of utter ordinariness (if one can label Hollywood as such), then he creates characters who are real: one believes them, their motivations, their innermost thoughts, their fears. Then Masterton, by dint of the supernatural, subverts all of this quotidian coziness into something evermore menacing, monstrous. Which, I suppose, is exactly the approach that made Stephen King into the popular storyteller he is today. But Masterton's prose isn't weighted down with repeated colloquialisms, is more focused and thus highly charged (like Clive Barker, Masterton *pushes* his material, doesn't avert his eyes and, thus, neither do we the readers. Not only are we shown the cadaver beneath the sheet, we are talked into performing the autopsy).

Martin Williams is a screenwriter, bashing out rewrites for *The A-Team* and various and sundry soaps. He is also a slick "talker," at one point promising a stringent old nurse a night on the town with Mr. T in exchange for some piece of vital information. Martin's real dream, though, is

that of seeing his musical, *Boofuls!*, brought to life in Tinseltown. Boofuls was a 1930's male analog to Shirley Temple, who sang and danced his way through but a few classic films before his grandmother chopped him into 211 pieces (literally; the forensics clean-up crew tallied them) and hung herself. Boofuls had lived to be eight years old, but never really *died*. His perky essence was absorbed into the mirror (gilded, crowned with the head of the great god Pan) that stood in the room where the boy was murdered.

Martin, being Boofuls' biggest fan, is ecstatic when news reaches him that this very mirror is for sale. Of course, he dashes out and buys it, mounts it upon the wall adjacent to his desk. Anyone with even moderate anxieties about mirrors will never regard them quite the same (and I won't blab away the "clinger" -- unlike the book's big-mouthed jacket copy). Just let me say this: what if the world described by Lewis Carroll in *Through The Looking-Glass* were real, intended not as escapist fantasy, but as a *warning*?

A warning against ... what?

You know how to find out; so do I.

BLOOD AND WATER AND OTHER TALES

Patrick McGrath

(Poseidon Press, \$15.95, 192 pages, paperback)

Here's a real head-page-turned-for-fans of the absurdly macabre.

Patrick McGrath is an answer to the question: what comes next, in the wake of writers such as Clive Barker, Thomas Ligotti, Skipp & Spector, Ray Garton? (Well, it's a question I've been asking!)

McGrath seems to be an author whose work, while possessing definite elements of horror, surrealism and shock, is going to be directed at the horror readership, simply, I believe, because it might be too strong -- or too goddamn *weird* -- to be appreciated by those with, shall we say, more

refined table manners.

Case in point: "Hand of A Wanker," the tenth offering in this slim volume of thirteen shorts, chronicles the doings of a dismembered hand of a compulsive masturbator. It is without question one of the funniest stories I've ever read. It might make some readers sick.

"The Boot's Tale," A-one kicker material (sorry), gives us a boot's description of a greedy family secured underground in their bomb shelter after World War III. *Bizarre* rings too falsely to adequately define this one.

"The Skewer" has an elderly gent haunted by three tiny psychiatrists -- Freud among them. Don't analyze; read.

In "The Lost Explorer," a surgeon's neglected daughter finds a British explorer of old. He's pitched a tent in her garden and is dying of Malaria, all the while raving about the pygmies. Monty Python meets Poe.

If you're bored with the latest offerings in the field you must give *Blood and Water* a try. You'll damage your brain, but the best writing always does this. We should be full of thanks and high praise for dangerous, naughty fellows like Patrick McGrath.

CHARLES BEAUMONT: SELECTED STORIES

Edited by Roger Anker

Illustrated by Peter Scanlan

(Dark Harvest, \$19.95, 404 pages, hardcover)

You might remember my review in the Summer 1984 *Horror Show* of *Best of Beaumont*, in which Beaumont's son Christopher mentioned the possibility of a forthcoming omnibus of his late father's stories -- here it is. Let me tell you: this is one hell of a book. If you consider yourself devoted to the masterful, dark, poetic tales of Charles Beaumont, then you'll want to get this one -- soon.

A special feature here, and I've never seen the like, are the in-

roductions heading each story, discussing the story's import to the intro-writer. I won't name them all, but represented are, again, Chris Beaumont, Ray Bradbury, Dennis Etchison (in a particularly moving revelation both touching and sad), Richard Matheson, Harlan Ellison (a bit self-involved considering the intro is supposed to be directed at how Beaumont affected Ellison's life and career, but maybe I'm too critical?), George Clayton Johnson, R.C. Matheson, (characteristically brief, poignant, effective), Ray Russell, Robert Bloch, William F. Nolan, and Roger Corman, for whom Beaumont scripted more than a few films.

It's marvelous to be able to have such powerful, classic Beaumont yarns available in a single volume. Who among us can ever forget the horrid, extreme shock of "Miss Gentibelle," easily one of the most deeply unpleasant stories yet written. I wish I could forget it. Along with this are tales such as "The Vanishing American," a suffocating allegory that deals with alienation. In "Free Dirt" we learn that, while graveyard soil might be free, the consequences for using it in one's garden are all too costly. And what are we to make of the tragedy, the ugly thoughts that sully the mind of a pretty teacher -- Miss Maple, in "The Dark Music."

Over and over, re-reading these stories, I'm struck by just how good was Beaumont. His voice, melancholic, nostalgic (though never maudlin), could turn abruptly black and furious without losing control. And yet he was no stranger to humor, either.

Other yarns included here are "Last Rites," "The Howling Man" (produced as a *Twilight Zone* episode), "The Magic Man," "Song For a Lady," "The Hunger," "Black Country," "The Jungle" (yet another *Twilight Zone*), "To Hell With Claude" (never published previously, like five other stories here), and many many more.

All told, there are 30 stories here for you to enjoy. You might

want to write *Dark Harvest* to thank them for giving us Charles Beaumont devotes the best by a writer we will never again know the likes of.



**FINE FRIGHTS:
STORIES THAT SCARED ME**
Ramsey Campbell
(Tor, \$3.95, 309 pages, paperback)

From one naughty gent to another. A collection of twelve tales that Campbell claims, "Scared me." Yeah, sure. What the hell could scare him? A *Reader's Digest* condensed version of *The Incarnate*? Ronald Reagan proclaiming the books of Campbell as "relaxing as my wife's cooking?"

Oh, come on! I'm just joshin' you. Must I be serious all the time?

Like the Beaumont and the McGrath, *Fine Frights* is quite worthy of your money. I was surprised by some of the names listed on the contents page: Philip K. Dick (though he was certainly one of the most frightening writers who ever lived, one associates his work, rightly, with sf), John Brunner, Bob Shaw. The rest came as no great shock: Karl Edward Wagner with "More Sinned Against," Joseph Payne Brennan and the superlative "Horror At Chilton Castle"; Thomas Ligotti is represented by the unsettling "Greater Festival of Masks," which reads like a paranoid blend of Italo

Calvino and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

True to its title, *Fine Frights* contains stories that evoke fear, though, some better than others. "Upon the Dull Earth," early Philip Dick, is assuredly the topmost chiller in the book, telling of angels and identity. You won't want to sleep after finishing this one.

"The Clerks of Doomsday," John Brunner's contribution, a very recent one, deals with strange tourists and their fevered photographing and measuring of historical landmarks, as though they are being recorded for eventual reconstruction. I found this one more thought-provoking than frightening -- but to each his own, right?

The opening yarn, "Child's Play," by Villy Srensen, unflinchingly shows us what happens when two boys try to amputate the leg of another boy. *Whew!* This has all the attraction of watching a snuff film -- you'll howl over it.

Fine Frights will probably please any horror fan.

**AMITYVILLE:
THE EVIL ESCAPES**
John G. Jones
(Tudor, \$4.50, 420 pages, paper)

Still with me? Why? Do you really want me to waste my time reviewing such a book as this?

In all fairness I have to; Dave pays me to read and write for the *Horror Show* audience, and it's not his fault what comes in the mail.

Amityville ... is a collection of six stories, all of which, obviously, build upon the framework of past books such *The Amityville Horror*, *Amityville Horror II*, and *Amityville Horror III - The Final Chapter* (and shouldn't we have learned by now that anything using "the final chapter" in its title is destined to stay around pissing off book and movie reviewers alike for eternity?).

I don't know if you'll agree, but I consider the novel *The Amityville Horror* -- even in light of the fact the whole affair was

hoaxed then hyped -- a frightening read. It could have been published as "fiction" and been nonetheless scary. But you all know how that went.

And there are chills, a lot of them, in this book. The problem is that, on the spine can be read the word "nonfiction"; yet the copy-right page states: "This is a work of fiction. The characters, names, incidents etc. ..." You know the rest. What's a reviewer, or a reader, to think? John Jones' intro proclaims "... this is fiction based on fact. There are truths here." Confusing, eh? The stories themselves chronicle the horror experienced by people who purchase contents sold from the infamous Lutz home at 112 Ocean

Avenue in Amityville, New York. The evil forces, it seems, don't care whether or not any of these people even knew of the Lutzes, or what happened in Amityville, they are somehow attracted to the belongings.

Make of this what you will. I wouldn't waste my dollars on it. No one summed it up better than Nanna, a character in the last story, "The Obsession":

"I never want to hear of Amityville again. Not as long as I live!"

Amen.

A brief closing note: I'd like to extend thanks to Paul Olson for having me as a contributing editor to his superb magazine *Horror-*

struck, which, as you know, is no more. My tenure, though it lasted only six months, was fun and exciting. Thanks, too, Dave, for asking me to take on your "Dark Voices" column. Isn't there a chance that someone might take on *Horrorstruck*, keep it alive as the most valuable nonfiction magazine in the genre?

FURTHERMORE

The Palace

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro
(Tor, \$3.95, 471 pages paperback)

The Unloved

John Saul
(Bantam, \$4.50, 358 pages, paperback)

THE DANCING FOOT

(continued from page 23)

and was tapping a beautiful, slow waltz. A smile came to Lansing's lips.

"Come in, old man," he called as the door inched open; he would now be able to see who was dancing so he could compliment him. The door opened all the way as the waltz ended.

There was no one there.

There was a squeak-shuffle and

Lansing began to scream hysterically as two severed feet came into the room. They stopped before his bed and began to dance again, a fast-paced tap dance this time. Lansing screamed and screamed but no one came to help him. One foot, a graceful, feminine one, was covered with a ballet slipper and was doing most of the work, while the other, the foot of a man in a

workman's boot, seemed to be getting better as it followed the other's example.

The dance ended, and after a short interlude for applause, another began.

Lansing, screaming and screaming, knew that the dance, the beautiful unending dance, would always be for him.



ENGLISH 303

(continued from page 37)

looked. His watch 5:54, the wall clock 5:53. Now the faces blurred and changed even when he looked straight at them, but seemed to be retarded in their shifting if he talked enough, talked fast and steadily enough. His watch 5:56, the wall clock halfway between 5:53 and 5:54. What was it the mathematicians said if you walked halfway to the wall, then half of the remaining distance, then half of the remaining distance--a girl there rows back sat with slimy loops of tongue coiled from her slack mouth onto her notebook like ropy yards of intestine. He looked and the impression receded only

slightly until he stepped up his pater, talked louder, faster, sensing corners and pockets of leering, bestial faces just to the side of his vision. He knew that to hold them back, to keep them from showing themselves any closer to the way they really were, he had to talk ever faster, ever more desperately. His watch 5:58, the wall clock not yet 5:54. He sat heavily down at his desk. He thought of Nancy, of the drink of water he wished to God he had taken now, of the gas pains he had had in his earlier class, pains that could almost have been a--there were nauseously protuberant

snouted visages and crusty paws clutching pens and he had to talk faster, louder, about James Joyce, about Shakespeare, about anything. He had to keep talking until six o'clock.

And he knew full well that by the clock on the wall, six o'clock would never come.



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Nightmares

HORROR HAPPENINGS, NEWS, EVENTS, LAST MINUTE BOOK RELEASES



FIRST ANNUAL HWA AWARDS

Horror Writers of America have given out their first annual awards for superior achievement in the horror field in 1987. Unlike most other writer organizations, these awards were not made under the guise of "best," but with the understanding that the awarded works represented superior achievement in the field. Here's how the awards went:

Novel

Swan Song by Robert R. McCammon
Misery by Stephen King

First Novel

The Manse by Lisa W. Cantrell

Novelette

The Pear-Shaped Man

by George R.R. Martin

The Boy Who Came Back From The Dead by Alan Rodgers

Short Story

The Deep End

by Robert R. McCammon

Collection

The Essential Ellison

by Harlan Ellison

Non-Fiction

Mary Shelley

by Muriel Spark

Life Achievement

Fritz Leiber

Clifford D. Simak

Frank Belknap Long

MINN-CON

Here's an event you'll enjoy: the 1988 MINN-CON, held annually in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. Since 1971, the MINN-CON has celebrated the Weird Tales tradition identified with H.P. Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, and Robert E. Howard, and continued by publishers such as Arkham House. This year (October 7-9) the guests will include: Robert Weinberg, Donn Herron, and Roger Gerberding. \$10.00 at the door. For more information: John Brower (612) 825-8256.



YANKEE

WITCHES

edited by Frank
McSherry, Charles
Waugh & Martin
Greenberg

YANKEE WITCHES

They're back! Waugh and Greenberg (accompanied this time by Frank McSherry) in their latest anthology effort *Yankee Witches*, published by Lance Tapley. The book includes fifteen short stories from literary masters such as John Cheever, Edith Wharton, Ogden Nash, H.P. Lovecraft, and Howard Pyle. Every New England state is

represented. With horror, humor, fact, and fantasy, the authors confront the reader with the question: Do witches still fly in New England? 316 pages. \$10.95 paperback.

THE GUNSLINGER

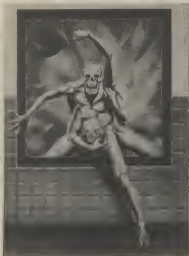
Here's something you might find fascinating: NAL has just released Stephen King's *The Gunslinger* on audiotape, read by the author himself. *The Gunslinger*, an epic tale of dark fantasy, is the first book in a series entitled *The Dark Tower*, which King started writing in 1970, as a college senior. It's a powerful story, easy to enjoy, especially after the first ten or fifteen minutes when King starts to settle down and really get into the reading. Four cassette tapes, nicely packaged. \$29.95.

DRAGON CON '88

Here it is, straight out: Guests of Honor include Alan Dean Foster, Fred Saberhagen, Margaret Weis, and Larry Elmore. October 7-9 at the Piremont Plaza Hotel in Atlanta, GA. \$30.00. For more information, contact Dragon Con, Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362.

RAISING GOOSEBUMPS FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Footsteps Press, under the guidance of Bill Munster, has just announced the release of the special edition chapbook of T.E.D. Klein's *Raising Goosebumps For Fun and Profit*. The book includes a lengthy essay on writing horror by Mr. Klein, plus dozens of illustrations by Peter Kuper. 5x8, 84 pages, die-cut cover, perfect bound, limited to 500 signed copies. \$13.95, plus \$2.00 postage and handling. Footsteps Press, Box 75, Round Top, TX 75273.



TOR BOOKS

Recent releases from TOR:

Necroscope by Brian Lumley. In the Balkan mountains of Rumania, a terrible evil is growing. The master vampire plots vengeance. His tool is a Soviet spy who works for world domination using the vampire's necromancy. Only Harry Keogh, *Necroscope*, can combat this evil.

Dark Satanic by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Jamie Melford is about to publish a book on witchcraft, and some very powerful force wants that book destroyed.

People of the Dark by T.M. Wright. It's a nice house on a quiet country road ... until the Harrises move in.

Charnel House by Graham Masterton. It was as if the sinister old house was alive-- waiting to release the raging demon within.

PSYCHO TRIVIA

Did you know that Alfred Hitchcock used seven people (including Anthony Perkins) to play Norman Bates in the movie *Psycho*? According to *Premiere*, he used five women and a man in addition to Perkins in the portrayal of Mrs. Bates. One stuntwoman, wielding a butcher knife, approached Janet Leigh in the shower; another actress actually wrestled with Leigh; yet another actress stabbed Martin Balsam. Why? Alfred Hitchcock

wanted the audience to maintain an image of Mrs. Bates as a frail, hunched-over old lady.

PULPHOUSE

The Hardback magazine

Edited by Kristine Kathryn Rusch, *Pulphouse* is a rather out of the ordinary idea. Four times a year, this "hardback" magazine will be appearing, each time sporting a different focus: Fall is their horror issue, Winter is speculative fiction, Spring is fantasy, and Summer is science fiction. All issues will have a limited press run of 1,250 copies. For more information, write to: *Pulphouse Publishing*, Box 1227, Eugene, OR 97440.



THE REVENANT

Jean and Vance fell in love immediately with the lovely old house with stood by the peaceful grounds of the Vicksburg National Cemetery. Yet almost as soon as they move in, the unearthly presences of long dead spirits make themselves know. Onyx Horror. \$3.95.

THE CASTLEWEAVER'S TALES

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A TEST

Here's a little test to find out if folks are actually reading this column. If you'd like an autographed copy of our Summer 1986 issue (a Dean R. Koontz Special!) at a great discount, then you're in luck. Make a copy of this section of *Nightmares*, add a check for \$3.95 (a savings of \$2.00!), and send it to me at Phantasm Press, 14848 Misty Springs Lane, Oak Run, CA 96069.

MYTHS THAT KILL

If you've picked up this issue from a newsstand or a grocery store, then welcome to the family. We hope you enjoy what you find in these pages, and we hope you'll remain a long-time reader. There is, however, a common myth that we'd like to put to rest before it puts us to rest. Newsstand sales are great, but after the retailers, wholesalers, and distributors get their fair share, there isn't much left. The best way to support *The Horror Show* is not to take out a subscription.

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*She took a deep suck on the Chesterfield.
The words that came out of her lips came in coils of smoke ...
about Grandpa Quinn and the razor blade.*

RAZORS

RON WOLFE

David Quinn hefted the last of his wife's three suitcases into the trunk of the Toyota. The suitcases rocked the back end of the car with a soft, dull thud, and he wondered about that sound.

He wondered if Laurel's lifeless body would sound like that. If he dropped her into the trunk the same way--

His throat caught in the revulsion of that image. David slammed the trunk door, anxious to see that Laurel was all right; that she couldn't be hurt by simply a bad thought.

Laurel sat tapping a perfectly-shaped nail against the steering wheel. The driver's side window was down.

"It's not right; it's not fair," Laurel said. A curl of blond hair dipped across her forehead, across skin as smooth as a china doll's face, as she leaned out the window.

"What? --" He could think of any number of not-fairs.

"For me to be gone the whole weekend," Laurel said. "I meant to let you get to work on the house, David, I really did."

She looked truly regretful, David thought. But he knew from the letters he'd found in Laurel's purse just how sorry she was to be leaving.

"Say hello to your sister for me," David said. "Have a good time. When you get back, I'll have the front room paneled, the bedroom repainted. Honest, blue eyes. It's what I want to do."

Laurel toyed with the key ring that dangled from the car's ignition. David knew she was only pretending to think about canceling the trip. He knew from those secreted letters that she was going to meet Thom Varley, the pretty boy from Laurel's office,

at Fountainhead Lodge.

"I'm already homesick for this place, I'm going to miss you so much, David," Laurel said.

He kissed her. The closeness to her imparted a lingering scent of Laurel's cinnamon-sweet perfume.

In that moment, David could have loved her forever; he could have forgiven her anything.

"Call me from your sister's house," David said.

"I will, every night," Laurel promised.

He thought of her picking up the phone at the bedside. Thom would object, of course. While she made the call, Thom would be finding things to do with her. Moist, warm things.

Laurel keyed the car's ignition.

David went cold at the sound of the revving engine. He thought he had planned for this -- thought he'd rationally planned to accept his wife's infidelity this one more time, because it gave him the chance to be alone. Alone, he could deal with the house. The wall. And, yes, -- Grandpa Quinn's razor, yes, *that* most of all.

But he didn't plan the ache -- the dread -- at seeing that car back down the driveway.

"I love you, David," Laurel said. "Be careful."

He watched the car's taillights blink as she turned the corner, out of sight.

He thought of twisted metal. Broken glass on the highway.

"I love you, too," he said.

David turned toward the old Quinn house -- turned with such reluctance, he could hear the slow crunching of his feet against the white-pebbled driveway.

He thought of Laurel's delight when he'd inherited the house in the terms of Grandma Quinn's will.

He couldn't argue with her. It made no sense to keep paying rent on a crackerbox apartment. With just a little of what Laurel called "fixing up," they could as well be living in the coziness of Grandma Quinn's house.

Corner lot. Broken picket fence. Blue house, peeling white trim. Empty flower boxes beneath the front windows.

David crossed the lawn. A week into April, and already the struggling grass was dotted with yellow dandelions. Mark that down, he thought, another job. Weed the lawn.

He took the sagging wooden steps up to the porch.

A breeze rocked the porch swing; it swung on its rusted chains with a comfortable, creaking sound, back and forth.

For a moment, David could have sworn he'd seen Grandpa Quinn in that swing. Grandpa Quinn's big right hand rested lazily over the side of the swing, trailing spatters of red back and forth across the wooden surface of the porch, back and forth, back and forth.

David forced himself to walk past the swing, to the front door, into the house.

He thought of Laurel. Pretty Laurel. He couldn't blame her for the shambles of what began as a marriage. His trouble wasn't a marriage gone wrong; it was a life gone wrong -- a life gone weak, gone sick, gone wanting, *because of this house.*

He'd been so afraid of this house, such a long time afraid of this house, he'd been afraid to live.

But that was going to change. Grandpa Quinn called to him, "There's Grandma's big man. David!"

David didn't answer.

#

Inside, David surveyed the yellowed walls, the scuffed floor, the water-stained ceiling. He took count of the fresh-smelling sections of paneling he'd stacked in the living room, the cans of bright paint. Carpeting. Boxes of ceiling tile.

He tried to imagine how the place would look -- would feel -- given that much of a remodeling. It wouldn't be Grandma Quinn's house anymore, David thought; it would be the home of David and Laurel Quinn. Nice couple. Good neighbors.

Where does he work? Oh, don't you know? -- at the savings and loan. Why, he's the branch manager, just promoted.

And that pretty wife. What a charmer she is. And, don't you know, they're inseparable.

That would be the way of it, David thought. He was going to rebuild. House and life, both the same ... rebuilt, repainted.

Oranges and yellows. Sunshine and warmth. And the sharp, clean smell of the new paint would cover the old smell of sadness.

David took a deep breath as a reminder. The stifled air tasted of dust, thick with memories. Grandma Quinn had built the place single-handedly, most of it, forty years ago. But David always thought of it as Grandma Quinn's house. A silent, wispy-haired old widow, she'd lived behind closed doors and drawn curtains.

The only time the family came to see her was at Thanksgiving, which David's mom always said positively ruined Thanksgiving.

David's dad always said, "Better Thanksgiving than Christmas."

Dad wheeled the Pontiac into the

graveled driveway. The tires crunched against the gravel. In the backseat, Davie's feet barely reached over the edge of the crinkly plastic seat covers.

Grandma Quinn always gave him such a tight hug, he could feel the bones in Grandma Quinn's thin, yellow arms.

And she would have a plate of chocolate chip cookies baked for him. Chocolate chips were his favorite. But Grandma Quinn's cookies tasted wrong, somehow, Davie thought. They hurt when he swallowed. And finally, he knew why, and he tried to tell Dad: Grandma Quinn's cookies tasted sad.

They tasted the same way the house felt, like the sounds the house made at night -- sort of like moaning, Davie thought.

Dad said, "Well, Davie, your grandmother can't help the way she is. But that's all the more reason for you to be nice to her, to make her feel better."

She never changed, though.

The only time she seemed happy at all was when she talked about Grandma Quinn as if he were still alive and might come through the door any minute, asking what's for supper.

And sometimes, Davie would hear Grandma Quinn in the bathroom, behind that closed door, talking to Grandma.

"Oh, William, please. Please, don't William! Here -- here, wrap your hand in the towel, William. Let me stop the bleeding. Please!"

Grandma Quinn's screaming was the worst part of that the part that made Davie's mother say she wouldn't come to visit Grandma Quinn anymore, and she wouldn't allow Davie to go near the place, either.

Years and years later, after the divorce ... she told David what had happened in the bathroom.

She lit a Chesterfield. Dad would have grabbed the cigarette out of her mouth, the same as he would have kept her from talking. But he wasn't there.

She took a deep suck on the Chesterfield. The words that came

out of her lips came in coils of smoke ... about Grandma Quinn and the razor blade.

People who wanted a house built -- and built to last of good, straight lumber and heavy, hard nails -- those people counted themselves lucky to have Big Bill Quinn on the job.

David couldn't have counted how many times people had told him that; he'd grown up hearing it, over and over.

He kept on hearing it those summers of working for college money on a construction crew. But he just wasn't the same as Grandma Quinn. David despised that work: the aching muscles, the sunburn, the festering splinters. Once, he'd broken a finger -- forefinger, left hand -- and it still ached with stiffness some mornings.

Grandpa Quinn never complained of an ache, or a splinter. If he broke a finger -- which happened sometimes -- he would pull it straight himself.

Grandpa Quinn probably didn't mind the way it felt to cut his veins open, David thought.

He made a good job of that, too.

The paneling proved addictive. The sections fit together like puzzle pieces, and David liked the snap! of the staple gun. There! Something done. There! Something done.

He was finished with the dark paneling in the living room, starting with the lighter sections in the dining room that adjoined, when the phone rang.

David answered, with a glance at his watch. 9:30. Laurel always called at half past the hour, as if to call at 17 minutes after, or 23, would be too spontaneous for him.

"Hi, Mr. Fix-it," Laurel said.

"Hi, blue eyes. How's it going there?"

"Great. Cathy says hello, and we're off to the lake tomorrow."

He knew she would say they were leaving the house -- so he wouldn't try to call her at her sister's house. "Well, I'm hard

..... about the author

Ron Wolfe is an entertainment writer, movie reviewer, and cartoonist for *The Tulsa Tribune*. He co-wrote (with John Wooley) a horror novel titled *Old Fears*, and their second novel, *Full Moon* will be out from Berkley next year.

at work," David said.

"I'll bet. Just remember, the wallpaper in the hallway is my job."

And what about pretty boy Thom? David thought. What's Thom's job, huh, Laurel? Screwing my wife while she lies to me; that's Thom's job.

David's hand clenched the staple gun. He felt the recoil, heard the gun snap. He thought of doing that to Laurel's eyes.

"Anyway, I love you, and I'll see you soon, David."

"--see you soon."

David pressed the staplegun to the palm of his left hand. He squeezed the gun. Snap! Punishment.

The pain roiled his stomach. He sat against the wall until he was all right again, and could pry loose the staple.

Everyone had strange, ugly ideas sometimes; David knew that. It didn't mean craziness. No. No, it certainly didn't mean suicide was genetic.

He thought of his dad: retired now, moved to Arizona, happy as a lizard out there, writing postcards about the weather.

And yet ... he feared. He'd been afraid a long time. Ever since he'd learned about Grandpa Quinn, he'd felt this tight, cold ball of conviction that someday, just like the old man, he was going to make that mortal cut.

So life was futile. So nothing mattered.

Unless, David thought -- *unless* he took that fear now, and dragged it into the light, and finished it.

That wouldn't be so very difficult.

All it took was a hole in the wall.

David's face contorted in the warped mirror of the medicine cabinet -- the face of some pale, sick-eyed creature, not him at all.

He opened the cabinet, swinging the mirror out of sight. Inside, centered in the back of the cabinet, was the blade slot. It was a common feature of houses built in

Grandpa Quinn's time. The tiny slot opened into the hollowed wall behind the cabinet: a safe, convenient place for disposing of old razor blades.

He thought he could see the wet sparkle of something red inside the slot. But that came from thinking about the old police report, the one about Grandpa Quinn's death, the one he'd discovered in sorting the contents of Grandma Quinn's bank deposit box.

The report said Grandpa Quinn cut his wrists open, and then he attacked Grandma Quinn with the same blade. And then -- as if all he'd done was finish shaving -- he dropped the blade into that slot in the medicine cabinet.

They knew from the bloodied handprints on the mirror, and the blood smeared around the slot.

They didn't think it was worth trying to "retrieve the instrument of death," because even if they'd opened the wall, there would have been lots of old blades inside.

David knelt beneath the sink, setting Grandpa Quinn's old tool box on the floor beside him. He found stiff gloves. He found Grandpa's chisel.

Hand trembling, he took the chisel in his right hand. His left hand ached and throbbed, but he was able to grip the hammer.

The chisel's biting edge scattered bits of old plaster.

Sweat stung at the corners of his eyes; it trickled to his lips, and tasted salty.

With hammer and chisel, he punched out a hole directly beneath the medicine cabinet, half-expecting the old blades to come spilling out. But they must have been lying scattered at the base of the wall.

He would know the one blade he sought; he felt sure of that. It would be ... corrupt to the touch.

He would take that blade, and he would break it and bend it, so it could never hurt him. And he would bury it. Far, far from this house, he would bury it, and he would forget where.

He would bury the haunted past.

And the house would be his,

then. He could live here. He would panel and paint, and he would have a bouquet of roses for Laurel when she got back, and life would start over, the way it should.

Impulsively, David thrust his gloved right hand into the hole. Questing. His fingers brushed against the far inner side -- the old wood that hadn't been seen or touched in forty years -- then down.

He felt the wispy net of a cobweb. And down. He touched the floor inside the wall.

There was a gritty sensation. Nothing more.

David looked up toward the medicine cabinet, making sure it was in a straight line over his hand. His fingers walked far to the left, to the right. Nothing.

His thudding heart seemed to collapse.

He stood, gripping the edge of the sink in light-headedness -- weak with the feeling of ...

Dismay. Betrayal. Anger. Foolishness. Relief.

His fingertips tingled so gently, he was scarcely aware of that odd sort of numbness. But it caused him to glance down, toward his hands against the rim of the sink.

He saw how the blood ran in fingers of red down the white side of the sink basin, pooling in a ring around the drain.

He saw the cuts in the fingertips of the right glove.

He lifted that hand, disbelieving, as if the cuts might disappear upon closer examination. A trickle of warm, amazingly bright red blood ran from beneath the glove, down the underside of his arm.

David pulled at the glove, queasy at the prospect of the razor cuts hidden beneath it, the result of a blade he must have brushed inside the wall.

Then: the faintest sound of something metal dropping onto the floor; a bright gleam, there, against the faded linoleum, beneath the sink.

He saw the double-edged blade. The blue metal glinted, the part

of it showing from beneath a dark splatter of David's blood.

David stood, his bleeding hand forgotten -- stood motionless, as if at the slightest movement, that blade would cut him, and cut him again.

But, of course, it was only a sharpened bit of metal. It didn't care whether he moved or not.

He thought: Pick it up. Bend it. Break it.

Still, he didn't seem able to do that. He felt the oddest sensation, that of his knees trembling, which he hadn't known could really happen. He would not allow that he would not be so belittled.

He knelt toward the razor. But even as he reached to pick it up, David thought: It's not the one. Not Grandpa Quinn's--

He felt a chilling calm. Surely, the damned blade had given him nightmares so many years, he could have *sensed* the evil to it. But now, his cut fingers and thumb clasped the blade, and he felt nothing.

It was just an old razor blade.

-- until Grandpa Quinn's callused hand thrust out from the hole under the sink, and wrested the blade from David's grip, and slashed him across the wrist with it.

Blood welled from the cut that wasn't deep, but deep enough. David felt the bleeding only as a numb kind of touch. Because -- now, as he got to his feet, he could see what Grandpa Quinn was doing.

Grandpa was running water into the old pedestal-legged tub. The water steamed, and Grandpa reached to give the cold tap another crank.

David backed against the door that he found closed and locked; the key wouldn't turn.

The water splashed in the old tub, churning red.

Grandpa reached to the pocket of his white shirt. He always wore a white shirt, David remembered. And, in that pocket, he always kept several cigars, cut neatly in half. A peculiar habit; it was Grandpa's way of treasuring a good

cigar.

Now, one foot propped against the edge of the gurgling old stool, he lit the cigar. The snap of Grandpa's prized Zippo lighter opened the cut in his thick, heavy wrist; it made the bone show.

Grandpa regarded that cut as if it were nothing more than a splinter; at worst, a broken finger.

"Pssst!" Grandpa said, a kind of chuckle; it made the smoke hiss from between his teeth.

The cigar smoke touched David's lungs. He wanted to cough, but that would mean the smoke was entirely real, and there wouldn't be any question about Grandpa being there.

Grandpa Quinn reached into his cigar pocket again, but this time, he brought out the razor blade. "Take it."

Grandpa's red-rimmed eyes seemed to penetrate. There was no keeping a secret from the old man.

The image of Laurel in the car trunk, and killed on the highway, and of the staple gun: Grandpa *knew*.

"TAKE IT!"

But David refused, knowing those weren't his own thoughts. He wouldn't have hurt Laurel, not really, not ever.

"Oh, yes, Davie lad," Grandpa said. "You would, and you will ... hurt that girl."

Bad thoughts were the devil's whisper. David remembered that from church camp, summer, so long ago. Bad thoughts were the devil's whisper, and everyone could hear the devil's whisper. The important thing was not to do what the devil said.

"But you *will*, lad." Grandpa's face flushed in anger, a patch of red between his eyes. "You will, because you've got the sickness -- got the craziness, sorry as hell, Davie, the same as I do. And it's not in the mind; it's in the blood. And the way to make it stop, while you still can ... is to let the blood out."

David's throat closed. He must have been crying.

Roughly, Grandpa took David's hand. He dropped the blade into the palm of that hand, but the



blade fell. It pinged against the old linoleum, must have bounced and pinged again, and again.

--let the blood out," Grandpa said, and there were more and more thin, tiny sounds from the floor: scraping, skittering.

"--OUT!"

And the old blades came spilling out of the wall.

The ceiling arched above him; the walls, lengthening, spread apart.

From beyond the door, David could hear the clatter of Grandma Quinn's wooden spoon against the mixing bowl more sad-tasting chocolate chip cookies. Already, some were in the oven. The air smelled sugary.

But the old blades were spilling out of the wall. Like sharp-edged, shining leaves, driven by some unfelt wind, they scattered across the old linoleum, more and more of them.

"This one ..." Grandpa knelt to pick a blade off the floor. Even kneeling, he was tall as Davie.

"This one, I cut the ear off a cat. Should have heard 'im yowl, Davie. I didn't know about the sickness then. Just thought it was funny."

Grandpa reached again.

"This one, I killed the neighbor's dog. Benedict, they called him, sort of a half cocker, half terrier. They missed that dog so much, I felt sort of bad afterwards.

Again--

"This one, I went clear across town. I found a kid nobody cared about, or he wouldn't have been out by himself -- all alone, out at night, no fear at all of strangers." Grandpa chewed a moment on the cigar, he spat a brown shred of tobacco. "But after that, hell, I knew I was sick, Davie. There were some others. And every time ... worse."

Grandpa stood: a grim giant.

David felt the beat of his heart falter between thuds.

"And ever time ... the blade I used, I would drop into that slot," Grandpa said, pointing a rock-steady hand into the medicine

cabinet. "Every time. Even the last one ..."

Grandpa's hand plunged into the blades on the floor, unheeding of being cut.

"This one," Grandpa said, holding the blade so that David could see it. The blade gleamed blue-white, not just from reflected light, but from a cold light within itself.

A soul within itself, David thought a kind of hunger.

Blood dripped from the edge of the razor.

David would have run. But his legs were too small. They were a five-year-old's legs, and Grandpa was huge. He wanted so much to be just like Grandpa.

"Here's how," Grandpa said. "Then, you do it."

Grandpa slashed the razor across his wrists, into the deep, dry ragged cuts that were already there.

-- when the bathroom door pulled open.

Grandma Quinn stood in the doorway. Grandma's oddly dark hair was pulled back to a tight bun; it made her whole face seem tight and frozen, so when she screamed, the frightening thing was that her mouth could open so wide.

And she was in the room then, and saying: "Oh, William, please. Please, don't, William! Here -- here, wrap your hand in the towel."

Neither of them seemed to know, or care, when Davie got out, sprawling into the hallway.

Crying, laughing, he was going to be incredibly sick in a minute, he glanced back. He saw Grandpa's tool box. The hammer and chisel. The clumsy hole under the sink. Bits of wallboard on the floor. Blood. Nothing else.

He would have to fix that hole, David thought, clean up that mess, before Laurel came back.

But he couldn't seem to move, as if deeply asleep; he couldn't quite awaken.

When he tried to push himself up from the floor, his hands slipped. The floor around him felt gelatinous. He found Grandpa's razor

where he'd left it, still half-embedded into his wrist, a silver glint beneath the edge of the glove.

Or maybe it wasn't Grandpa's razor at all, but just the first one he'd found inside the wall. That didn't really matter.

He wondered how long he'd been unconscious on the floor, but that didn't matter, either.

What mattered: he could hear the car door slam, out there in the driveway. He could imagine Laurel, standing there a moment, wondering why he didn't come out to meet her.

Now, he discovered he could stand.

He shouldn't have been able to do that, to press himself against the wall, in the darkness of the hallway -- the blade poised, ready to swing. But he did, just as the front door clicked open.

"David?"

He waited.

"David, you loony, you're scaring me," Laurel said.

He waited ... until she was close enough, he could smell the cologne that wasn't his that still clung to her.

"David ... I've got something to say ... something serious."

Click of the lights going on. Footsteps. Hers -- and the heavier steps of another person behind her.

Pretty Thom said, "Maybe you'd better let me talk to him."

"David?"

She came into the hallway. David let her see him. Her blue eyes shot wide.

--and the devil whispered.

David left the house to sit outside in the cool night. He rocked in the porch swing. He lit a half-cigar, and savored the sweet taste.

Finally, she quite screaming, quite moaning, and the house was quiet again, the way he liked it.

He went in.

He dropped the used blade in the slot in back of the medicine cabinet.

He unwrapped the blue paper on a package of new blades.





*Every bully needs a henchman;
someone to laugh at his jokes,
share his malicious schemes and
admire his reign of terror.
That's where I came in.*

CURSED FROM THE EARTH

ROBERT E. COOK

Seeing Morgan so often, and I see him almost every day, out on the sidewalk, rain or shine, I've grown used to it. I never thought I would. My dreams are haunted by that night, I've relived the horror until I've rubbed the jagged edges smooth; touching the fear and the pain over and over, the way we all do, just to make sure we still exist, still feel something. I feel a lot less now and maybe there's horror in that. Anyway, I hurt enough to know I still exist.

We all grew up together. It's funny how, in rural areas at least, one generation succeeds another. I mean, babies are born every year, you'd think they'd all blend together, seamlessly, but it doesn't seem to happen that way.

We all grew up in the poor white, dirt road, broken down, bare-foot country. I remember us as kids; a mean, vicious, heartless bunch. Morgan, his slattern angel sister Alice, Dewey Terrell, Joe Mendham, my sister and I, oh, a whole bunch of us; and Ronnie Jeeter. Cruel and strong or weak and vicious, that was us.

Morgan was the strongest and, I think, even in the light of what came later, the cruelest. A head taller than any of the rest of us and the weight to go with it. And mean. The kind of kid who tortures animals and birds. His eyes would light up when he thought of some piece of infernal mischief and all the rest of us could do was hope it wouldn't be directed our way. We believed our lives depended on staying on his good side, narrow as it was.

Every bully needs a henchman;

someone to laugh at his jokes, share his malicious schemes and admire his reign of terror. That's where I came in. I was maybe the one kid big enough to stand up to Morgan and make it stick, at least now and then. I didn't do that. I either stood by or joined in and it's only fair you know that about me.

And if a bully needs a stooge he also needs a fool. And that was Ronnie Jeeter. When I think back on those times I always picture Ronnie with his arm twisted behind his back, face contorted and howling with pain as Morgan forced him to do or say something he was opposed to and all of us watching and laughing; Alice egging her brother on. Ronnie Jeeter: pale blue eyes, fathomless and dull, colorless hair, invisible eye lashes; bony and awkward and staring. You never knew if he was a genius or an idiot.

The Jeeters lived way to hell and gone out in the boondocks; poor even by our standards. God or the devil knows how many of them there were living in that ugly peeling old yellow and brown house. It's odd, now I think of it, but as far as I know, none of us were ever inside. Ronnie never invited us and if he had, who would have gone? We used to call him and all his myriad grimy little brothers and sisters "black-faces." They were like little coal miners of poverty: noses running, fingers sticky, their hair cropped short and standing on end. Ronnie was maybe a little bit cleaner than the rest of them. At least he was clean enough so I remember seeing the blue veins in his temples through his thin, curdled milk skin.

It was a mystery how they sur-

..... about the author

Robert E. Cook was born in 1947 in upstate New York and happily spent his misanthropic teens reading Poe, Lovecraft, Bierce and Bradbury. Aside from reviewing films for a local publication, this will be his first published effort.

vived on that pitiful worn-out farm; a rocky, brambly plot of land that would have tried Job. Most of our dads took factory work in town to make ends meet but somehow the Jeeters made do. A muddy balding yard out front with scrawny diseased-looking chickens pecking each other; a few scrupulous pigs in a sty right off the house, and some starved Holsteins nuzzling stunted yellow grass in a pasture that gradually degenerated into swamp. That was the Jeeter farm. Every time it rained it looked like the whole place would just soften and melt back down into the earth.

And then there were the rumors. The Jeeters had an enormous tawny cat that roamed everywhere. No dog dared mess with it. Mrs. Henshaw claimed the cat was killing her chickens and so she poisoned it. Within a year, she was dead of a terrible cancer. Her husband said the drugs had no effect on her; only death stopped her screaming.

Another neighbor woman gave birth to -- hell, what can I call it? A monstrosity. It died soon after birth but rumor got around that it had fangs and claws and pointy ears.

Oh, there were other things; the usual. Lights in the sky; visitors no one knew, odd looking people dressed in dark colors, something maybe Eastern European about them. And at times, the most awful smells used to surround that dreary farm: bitter, acrid smells that seemed almost familiar but not something you pressed yourself to remember.

Ronnie had this, we could never decide if it was a birthmark or a tattoo, on his left palm. Who gets his palm tattooed? And a kid at that. It was sort of a blotch. Some kids thought it was a tree; some an octopus.

The years went by but Morgan's pleasure in torturing Ronnie never waned. In high school once, he stripped Ronnie naked, tied him up with his own clothes and left him on a street corner, squalling for mercy.

I doubt if heretics dreaded the Inquisition more than Ronnie, in

his wrinkled gray shorts and sagging holey tee shirt, dreaded gym class. Bird legs was probably the kindest name we ever called him.

We used to say that Morgan would kill Ronnie or make a man of him.

After high school we scattered. I even went to a junior college for a year. Mostly I studied beer. With my academic career floundering badly I decided that war might be more entertaining than work and I joined the Marines; another in a long series of my miscalculations.

I was in boot camp at Parris Island when I got a letter from Morgan, maybe the only one he ever wrote, along with a newspaper clipping telling how Ronnie Jeeter had been arrested for statutory rape of a fourteen year old girl. In a graveyard. Morgan thought it was hilarious.

Vietnam concentrated my limited attention span wonderfully until a Viet Cong sniper put one bullet through my hand and another through my jaw, shattering both. Doctors in Japan did what they could for me and then shipped me stateside where American know-how was supposed to fix my face as good as new, which was little enough to ask in my case. They gave it up after awhile. The jaw line on the left side of my face has a big dent with dead white streaks radiating out from it. I talk a little funny but you can understand me. My left hand is stiff and semi-useless.

It's not a big deal; I get a bit of a pension out of it. A couple of local boys didn't come back at all and a couple came back in pretty rough shape. Of course, that may be what they say about me.

So I came back after the Marine Corps, the war and the hospital. A lot had changed and a lot hadn't. I got a job in a container factory and drank the evenings away at a bar called Tiny's. I developed a crush on Morgan's sister, Alice. She sat at the bar and every night a different guy bought her drinks and took her back to her apartment across the street over the dry cleaner's.

And naturally, Morgan, the big-

gest, roughest, meanest of us all, missed the whole war, rejected because of a hernia. While the rest of us were getting our sharp edges planed off in the jungles of South East Asia, Morgan stayed behind and drank, acquiring a thick coat of beer fat and pure meanness.

So there we were at Tiny's. Morgan playing pool and loudmouthing in the far corner of the bar with Tommy, the mechanic from the Flying A station. Alice at the bar drinking and laughing with some hick. Everybody but me could make her laugh. I was sitting alone at a table by the jukebox, nursing my third boilermaker and calculating how many more it would take to turn me into a scintillating conversationalist. Alice was wearing a skin-tight, black micro-mini skirt and the sight of her fat white thighs made my palms sweat. I rubbed my scarred, dented jaw and wondered if I might not possess some fine hidden quality that Alice would discover and admire. The jukebox was driving me nuts to the tune of "Green Tambourine."

In walked Ronnie Jeeter. I didn't recognize him. He'd grown tall, maybe six four; so tall his head had pushed right up through his hair, leaving him bald as an egg, except for a colorless fringe around the back and sides. With that same bluish curdled skin, lipless mouth and cadaverous cheeks he looked more like an undertaker than any man ought to. A teen-age girl was with him; small, thin, with wrinkled dark hair and a flat tough face.

Morgan opened his big fat yap and said, "Well I be damned, Ronnie Jeeter!"

Then I recognized Ronnie. He was looking around through the cigarette haze, recognizing Morgan's voice but not seeing him. The shaded lights above the pool tables lit up the green baize and threw the players in shadows.

Morgan shouldered people aside and planted himself in front of Ronnie and the girl. He put his hand out and Ronnie looked at it like it a fish and then shook it.

"Who's this, Ronnie, the wife?" Morgan hooted.

I was feeling way too old for this shit. Morgan would never give this up until it got ugly. Ronnie's translucent pallor almost glowed. Bleary eyed as I was, I thought I could see snaky blue veins pulsing in his naked head. The girl was looking up at him.

"Damn, Ronnie, where you been keeping yourself? And where'd you find this pretty little thing? The cemetery?" Morgan cracked himself up with that one.

"Things have changed, Morgan." Ronnie said this very softly, confidently. Morgan didn't notice.

Aw, Ronnie. I just want a little dance with your wife here, or is she your daughter?" Morgan grabbed the girl's wrist and tugged her toward him.

Morgan grabbed
the front of Ronnie's
white shirt
with both hands,
whirled him around
and slammed him
into the wall
by the door.

Ronnie took a deep breath and said, "I am the Summoner now. Go away, Morgan. Go away and live."

Tiny's got quiet. Pool cues were lowered; drinks put down; John, the bartender, coughed.

"Why, what's that you say, Ronnie? You gonna hurt me? Huh?"

Morgan grabbed the front of Ronnie's white shirt with both hands, whirled him around and slammed him into the wall by the door. Ronnie had grown tall but Morgan was much heavier.

"C'mon, boy, you feel froggy, you go ahead and jump!"

And then Ronnie began to speak. I couldn't understand any of it, didn't repeat it if I had to. It went on and on, the words, sounds, whatever they were, spilling out, Ronnie's mouth contorted with the strangeness of what he was saying. Froth gathered in the corners of

his mouth and those pale blue eyes turned up in their sockets until all you could see was white. I thought he was having a fit.

The whole bar went dead still, it was that impressive. The strangest thing of all, maybe, Al Marx, an older guy who hung out at Tiny's and never said boo, dropped to his knees and was mouthing the words right along with Ronnie. Or seemed to be. That's what made me think maybe it was German. But I've heard German and this wasn't it.

Morgan took his hands off Ronnie. His face was shiny with sweat. It sounds funny; I don't know how to describe it, but it felt, well, it felt like the room had tipped sort of sideways, like a ship at sea. Although, I can't say just which way it tipped. It was like, I don't know, an earthquake, like something shifted.

Morgan started to say something a couple of times but nothing came out. Then he got a grip on himself and laughed; a high-pitched he-he-he sort of laugh.

"Hey, Ronnie, that's some thing you spout. What the hell is that?"

Ronnie glowered. The sweat was running down Morgan's face in rills and the back of his shirt was dark and damp. I noticed Al Marx was back on his feet, head down like he was in church.

Ronnie and the girl walked out of Tiny's and the door closed behind them. It was so quiet I could hear my ears ringing. Our little tableau came slowly to life. Billiard balls smacked. Alice took a cigarette out and her admirer lit it for her. John asked a customer what he was drinking. Morgan looked around like he had lost something and then wandered over to my table and sat down heavily.

We drank. We talked about the past in a profane, desperate, helpless way, smoking furiously. The harsh flare of the matches lit up our dazed red faces. John had to throw us out to close up.

Our small shabby town was sleeping but could have passed for dead. No traffic: a shadowland except for the humming lights over

the gas pump islands of the Flying A station on Cuyuga Street; Tommy, the mechanic, asleep in the office. Morgan and I weaved up the steep hill that runs by Tiny's to our cars, drunk as skunks. Our long shadows followed us up the hill. We could smell chocolate from the candy factory.

Morgan saw Ronnie first. I was watching my feet, trying futilely not to stagger, concentrating on every step. Morgan said, "Ronnie." I looked up and there he was, under a high branching elm across the street, the girl beside him.

I saw Ronnie raise his arms, his fingers long and white and splayed. And then I saw it. Something like a bat, flitting in the yellow lamp post light. Something dark and impossibly quick. Was it a bat? I was so drunk. It was furry. I thought I saw a tail. I swear it had red eyes.

I ducked and put my hands over my face. Morgan grunted as it hit him and then he began to scream, like a rabbit I heard once, caught on barbed wire. It was on him, everywhere; tearing, slashing, biting. I tried to grab it but it

was never two seconds on the same spot. Morgan's blood splashed in my eyes, blinding me, speckling the sidewalk and the trees as he flailed. Morgan staggered and fell, rose and fell again, lurched against a building and slowly slid down the wall, the thing ripping into him.

Then it was gone. I watched it dip and glide back across the street toward Ronnie and then lost sight of it in the shadows of the leaves.

Ronnie's hollow face bared its teeth for a second. Morgan moaned and I looked back at him. When I turned around again, Ronnie and the girl were gone.

Morgan was a mess. The muscles and tendons in his arms were stripped bare of flesh. His legs were torn and useless. His face was hamburger bleeding steadily from blind eyesockets. Most of his fingers were bitten off and his ears were tatters. I could see the slick white skull bone through the rents in his scalp. He looked like he'd fallen into a reaper.

I'd learned enough about serious injuries in the war to keep Morgan

from bleeding to death on the way to the hospital. Another case of a little knowledge not being such a good thing, I guess.

Like I said, that was all a long time ago and for me the horror has faded. Actually, I kind of pulled myself together after that. I got a better job with the power company, even made enough money to ask Alice to marry me; which she did. Her past bothers me sometimes; hell, her present bothers me sometimes, but I'm in no position to be choosy. Anymore living alone and I'd have shot myself. So there it is.

Morgan, blind, on crutches, begs on the streets, sleeps in alleys, survives somehow, a ragged shambling hulk. The other day, driving past him in the pickup, Alice looked out the window at him and said (Alice isn't long on charity), "I wish that damned thing would die."

I didn't say anything, but the word that stuck in my mind was "damned."



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FRAGMENTS

G.L. RAISOR PRESENTS
AN EXCERPT FROM KEVIN J. ANDERSON'S
RESURRECTION, INC.



HOMEBOY MAKES GOOD!

If The Horror Show were a newspaper, that's the headline we would run to describe how we feel about Kevin J. Anderson and his new novel from Signet, *Resurrection, Inc.* We always get excited here at the magazine when one of our alumnus does well, and Kevin has, indeed, done well. His melding of horror and science fiction about raising the dead is fast-paced and harrowing, with plenty of thrills and a touch of the gruesome, as you will see from our preview. And yet, *Resurrection, Inc.* manages to be more than just entertaining. It is also a thoughtful novel that explores several age-old issues -- the right of one person to own another and the morality of raising the dead.

Kevin graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in Physics/Astronomy. That

was four years ago. Since that time he has sold over one hundred and thirty stories, articles, and reviews to such publications as: *Amazing*, *Astronomy*, *Fantasy* and *Science Fiction*, *New Destinies*, and *Weirdbook*. In 1987 one of his stories was published in *The Year's Best Fantasy Stories 13* by DAW Books.

At this moment, Kevin is working on about a hundred different projects, including several more novels, an unspecified number of short stories and articles, and trying to find time to do them all. If we know Kevin, he'll find the time.

[*Resurrection, Inc.* has become a powerful corporation with a corner on the market of raising the dead. With a synthetic heart and blood, and a microprocessor to drive the body, *Resurrection, Inc.* provides these "Servants" to the workforce to do manual and domestic labor. The Enforcers Guild has established a strict curfew because of the street violence engendered by blue-collar workers who have lost their jobs because of Servants, and also because of the cult of neo-Satanism, a powerful religion that has sprung up. And there's an underground group of "Cremators" somewhere on the streets, who do everything they can to destroy bodies before they can fall into the hands of *Resurrection, Inc.*]

The two Enforcers found the dead man in the street, long after curfew. The city's night hung around them, tainted with a clammy mist caught between the tall and

dark buildings. The smell of fresh blood and the sweat of close-packed bodies drifted upward into the air.

The slain man was naked, spread-eagled inside a geometrically perfect pentagram drawn in blood. At each of the five corners of the pentagram, candles of black paraffin burned, made to look archaic with artificially molded runnels of wax along the sides. A wide knife wound hung cleanly open in the center of the victim's chest, like an appalled extra mouth.

With a throb of its rear jets, the Enforcers' armored hovercar descended to the flagstones. As the engine smoothly purred its way into silence, Enforcer Jones, a tall and thin black man, emerged from the craft. He hung back uneasily, remaining near the hovercar. "Neo-Satanists again!" he muttered under his breath.

The other Enforcer, Frampton, agreed. "Yeah, they give me the creeps." But he went eagerly forward, amused and confident of his own body armor.

Weapons bristled from pockets and holsters on the Enforcers' body armor; a touch helmet with a laser-proof black visor covered their faces. In the mercifully brief four weeks Frampton had been assigned to him, Jones had never seen Frampton's face, but somehow he imagined it would wear a stupid boyish grin, maybe some scattered pimples, maybe curly hair.

"Think I should put out the candles?" Frampton asked.

Jones moved away from the hovercar, shaking his own revulsion of the pentagram, the blood sacri-

fice. "No, I'll do it. You see to his ID."

Frampton retrieved some equipment from the hovercar while Jones stepped forward, squashing each of the five black candles with the heel of his boot. In the distance, between gaps of the massive squarish buildings, he could see the running lights of another patrol car moving in its sweep pattern.

Frampton made a lot of noise as he tumbled the equipment onto the flagstones. He pushed one of the scanner-plates flat against the dead man's palm, waiting for the optical detectors to map the swirls and rivulets of the man's fingerprints, searching for a match in the city's vast computer network.

"Nothing on The Net about him." Frampton double-checked, but came up with the same answer again.

"Figures," Jones said noncommittally.

"Ever wonder how the neo-Satanists *always* manage to get people who aren't even on the Net? Weird." Frampton sounded breathless. He was always trying to make conversation.

Jones turned an expressionless black visor at his partner for a long and silent moment. "How do you know they don't just alter the data on the Net?"

Frampton considered this in silent amazement. "That would be awfully sophisticated!"

"Don't you think *this* is sophisticated?" Jones jabbed a hand at the body, the candles, the pentagram. "Enforcers sweep this area every five minutes after curfew. And the neo-Satanists *still* managed to get him out on the street, light the candles, draw the pentagram, and then vanish before we could get here."

Jones bent to take the body's feet while the other Enforcer tightened his handhold under the man's armpits. Jones could feel the rubbery dead flesh of the victim's ankles even through his flexsteel-mesh gloves.

They placed the slain man in the back compartment of the hovercar, folding his arms and legs neatly

to fit him into the cramped space. Frampton stood with a miniature Net keyboard in his hand, punching in data about the discovery. "Verify cause of death," Frampton said. "Single wound, no other apparent bodily damage, no identity information on The Net."

Jones glanced at the yawning wound in the man's chest. "Verified."

"To Resurrection, Inc., right?"

"Yeah."

Frampton dropped his voice. Because of the dark visor, Jones could read no expression on his partner's face. "Man, I hope that never happens to me."

Danal stumbled slightly from the throbbing flashback as he tried to keep a calm, placid expression on his face, a *Servant's* expression.

Jones closed the compartment and set the controls for a quick-freeze. A hissing noise filled the air. "What? Being a neo-Satanist sacrifice, or becoming a *Servant*?"

"Neither one."

[The body is taken to Resurrection, Inc. where it is reanimated and given the name of Danal. Servants are not supposed to have any recollection of their former lives, but Danal experiences strange feelings when he learns he is to be delivered to Vincent Van Ryman, the High Priest of neo-Satanism. Van Ryman has been very specific: he wants *this* particular *Servant*, and no one seems to know what the High Priest has in mind.]

As the hovercar approached its destination, Danal spotted the vast Victorian-style mansion looming in front of them, an anomaly

among the crowded condominium complexes. The gabled house seemed to command the entire area, standing alone at the end of the block, surrounded by a small lawn of carefully groomed green vinyl sod.

Van Ryman's bizarre home bristled with odd angles, sharp gables, and black and peeling shutters. One of the gutters hung carefully askew, as if it had been mounted purposely off balance to provide a calculated effect, dramatically decrepit. A weathervane driven by a random motor sent the silhouette of a capering demon in drunken pirouettes. Statues of leering gargoyles squatted on the gables, somewhat brighter and more polished than the rest of the structure, as if they were new.

But the gargoyles were removed. Stricken from the home in disgust.

Why were they back?

Danal stumbled slightly from the throbbing flashback as he tried to keep a calm, placid expression on his face, a *Servant's* expression. He grasped at the fleeing thought that had soared outward from his mind's core, slipping through his mental fingers. Ripples in his memory died away, leaving a blank hole, and no more of an answer.

He wondered if all *Servants* felt this way.

The Enforcer unsealed the detention/cargo compartment, allowing Danal to step methodically out of the hovercar. The *Servant* stood next to the Enforcer in front of Vincent Van Ryman's mansion, waiting. The Enforcer seemed uneasy, jittery.

"Vincent Van Ryman?" he called, afraid to go any nearer to the house. "I have escorted your *Servant*." Danal stood perfectly still, expressionless. "You go first, *Servant*. Command: Walk."

The Enforcer motioned him ahead, and Danal strode down the walkway to the porch. The sidewalk was poured from black textured concrete and clean, without weeds. He mounted the creaking steps of the porch, where the rail appeared splintered and weathered, but when he focused his attention on it for

an instant, he realized that it had been painted and textured to appear so. Everything here had the tinge of familiarity to it, and the part of him that wasn't frightened *wanted* to see what lay hidden inside Vincent Van Ryman's home.

Deja vu. The phrase suddenly clicked into his head, and somehow it felt right.

Apparently relieved at seeing his charge delivered safely, the Enforcer saluted the unseen monitors in Van Ryman's house, then turned and hurried back to the hovercar. Danal watched him, puzzled, and then faced the door.

"Your Servant Danal reporting for duty, Master Van Ryman." He remained on the porch, drinking in details of the wood, seeing an artificial hornets' nest carefully mounted under one of the eaves. He stared at the ornate door-knob, at the hideous brass gorgon's head that gripped a door-knocker in its fangs.

A voice struck at him from a speaker hidden in the gorgon's jagged mouth. "Open the door and come in, Danal."

The interior hall was oddly lit by a hanging chandelier that left the corners in a deep murk. Plush purple carpeting cushioned his feet as he took another step forward, and stopped. His Master Van Ryman stood in shadows at the end of the hall.

"Welcome, Danal." His attitude seemed to show an irregular mix of excitement and terror, masked by an effort to seem placid.

Danal voluntarily used the microprocessor to think and examine with greater speed, filing the details in his growing mental database. Van Ryman was almost exactly the same size and build as Danal, but he had dark, lanky hair grown long and square about his shoulders; his face was wide and somewhat rough, but receptive. A rich green robe loosely covered his tight-fitting black clothing. Van Ryman's forehead was damp and glistening clean, reddened as if he had just scrubbed it vigorously.

They stood frozen, staring at each other, and Danal suddenly felt oddly like an animal squared off at a territorial boundary. Van Ryman's face sparked a strange reaction in the Servant. He seemed familiar, oddly so. Danal wanted to ask a question, but he felt queasy inside, uneasy, even though his synHeart carefully regulated his pulse. Without the subtle control of his facial muscles to show and release his anxiety, the turmoil reflected back into his mind.

To break the frozen moment, Danal reflexively turned away to close the heavy door.

Vincent Van Ryman chuckled to himself and took two steps closer; Danal could hear his quiet sigh of relief like thunder in the muffled silence of the house. Under the better lighting of the chandelier, Danal saw his master's eyes, and realized that *they* had struck a lance of disorientation in him, *the eyes* ... somehow wrong.

"Once again, let me welcome you into my home, Danal." Van Ryman's gaze was marginally fearful, flicking over Danal's face, penetrating, as if waiting for some reaction. The Servant fought to keep from staring at his Master, at the man's familiar features, at his unfamiliar eyes.

Van Ryman surprised him by stepping forward to grasp his gray Servant's jumpsuit, pulling it open at the chest. With a discernible shudder of excitement or revulsion, Van Ryman touched the lumpy pale scar of Danal's death wound on his pallid skin. The man smiled to himself, nodding. Incapable of resisting, the Servant stood motionless for the inspection.

"Won't you come into my study? Command: Follow." He spoke cordially, but firmly, with enormous self-confidence. Van Ryman started down the hall, then turned to keep his eyes on Danal, as if uncomfortable at having his back to the Servant. They passed a small control room for the surveillance systems, and a bathroom. Danal followed, wide-eyed again, gulping

in the details of the house as he walked.

He felt a sense of skewed antiquity in the dark elegance: many things old and valuable, but with no common focus or period, as if a collector had gathered them simply because they were old, not caring whether they belonged together in the same decor.

Did it always seem like

twilight in this house before?

Danal mentally slapped himself to drive away the buzzing voice in his mind. The flashbacks emerged like the memories of a stranger, someone he had never known, someone vastly different from Danal himself. The errant, disconnected thoughts frightened him, but he fought against an even greater fear of asking questions.

Van Ryman padded around a corner, and they emerged into the firelit study. Van Ryman turned again, looking at him with a hopeful and desperate expression.

"I'd like to have a long talk with you, Danal. I need some answers."



THE SECOND "THIS MONSTER WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY GAINESBURGER" QUIZ

THE ANSWERS:

- | | |
|--------|--------------|
| 1. b | 10. b |
| 2. c | 11. c |
| 3. A-c | 12. a |
| B-d | 13. d |
| C-a | 14. b |
| D-b | 15. c |
| 4. a | 16. a |
| 5. b | 17. b |
| 6. A-c | 18. a |
| B-a | 19. d |
| C-b | 20. a |
| 7. c | Bonus |
| 8. a | The Grateful |
| 9. d | Dead |

THE SECOND
"THIS MONSTER WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY GAINESBURGER" QUIZ
THE SPIN-OFF

A.R. MORLAN

Good evening ... tonight's entertainment takes the form of what our sponsor calls a "horror-fantasy television quiz." During the course of the next fifteen minutes (not counting commercials) you will be expected to rack your memory, in search of arcane answers to questions regarding horror-fantasy television shows, and that peculiar hybrid of the cinema and television, the made-for-TV-movie. The quiz will begin after this interruption from our sponsor ...

Scoring: Over 15 points: no doubt you went to the slumber parties at the Addams house when you were small. Over 10 points: does your car perchance sound a little like Ann Southern? Over 5 points: let's get this straight -- the *Monsters* were the monsters and their *niece* was the normal one! Under 5 points: Alfred Hitchcock's sponsors would have loved you!

1. While *The Prisoner* (Patrick McGeehan) usually considered the current Number 2 in the Village to be his greatest nemesis, Number 6 also had to worry about the Village's bubble-like "warden" which could be programmed to hunt down and haul in any would-be escapee from the Village. These roaring white bubbles were called: (1 pt.)

- a. roamers b. rovers c. rumblers d. retrievers

2. During the first season of *Night Gallery* (1970), Joseph Campanella starred in an episode called "Nature of the Enemy," which dealt with the strange disappearance of a moon landing team ... who, shortly before their deaths, built a huge, oddly familiar looking gizmo on a platform -- which happened to be trap for a huge: (1 point)

- a. bug-eyed monster b. rock creature c. mouse d. sand snake

3. The following comic actors played straight dramatic roles in the horror-fantasy shows listed below. Match the erst-while funnyman with his role: (4 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| A. Bob Newhart | a. "A Game of Pool," 1960's <i>Twilight Zone</i> |
| B. Robert Klein | b. "Mr. Magic," <i>Amazing Stories</i> |
| C. Jonathan Winters | c. "How Not To Murder Your Wife," <i>Alfred Hitchcock Hour</i> |
| D. Sid Caesar | d. "Wordplay," 1980's <i>Twilight Zone</i> |

4. Which *Outer Limits* episode listed below *didn't* star Robert Culp? (1 point)

- a. "The Mutant" b. "Architects of Fear" c. "Deamon With a Glass Hand" d. "Corpus Earthling"

5. A popular British rock group of the 1960's once made a guest appearance on the British show *Dr. Who* ... but who were these Anglo rockers? (1 point)

- a. The Who b. The Beatles c. The Kinks d. Led Zepplin

6. Three of Irwin Allen's fantasy TV shows of the 1960's and '70's featured special craft which played a major role in each episode. Match the craft with the series: (3 points)

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| A. Spindrift | a. <i>Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea</i> |
| B. Seaview | b. <i>Lost in Space</i> |
| C. Jupiter 2 | c. <i>Land of the Giants</i> |

7. One of the shows listed below set what had to be a record, of sorts -- in only one season it featured almost every monster imaginable (including Jack the Ripper, a "rakshasah," a succubus, a vampire, a were-wolf, an ape creature, a robot-gone-mad, a zombie, a witch, a swamp creature and a first of sorts -- a motorcycle-riding headless corpse!). Which monster-rich show was it? (1 point)

- a. *The Outer Limits* c. *Kolchack: The Night Stalker*
b. *Thriller* d. *Night Gallery*

8. Despite getting four shows on the air within a decade, Irwin Allen wasn't able to sell one of his pilots, which was aired as a made-for-TV movie ... which one of the films below was the Allen idea the network executives passed on? (1 point)

- a. *City Beneath the Sea* (1970) c. *The Aquarians* (1970)
b. *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* (1973) d. *Genesis II* (1973)



9. Speaking of the 1970's boom in horror-fantasy made-for-TV-films, 1976's *Look What's Happened to Rosemary's Baby* only featured one of the performers seen in the original film ... who turned up in both movies? (1 point)

- a. Mia Farrow b. John Cassavetes c. Charles Grodin d. Ruth Gordon

10. Although William Daniels used to supply the voice of the super-smart car in *Knightriders* not too long ago, the *St. Elsewhere* star made another foray into fantastic TV, in a 1966 *Batman*-inspired one-season sitcom that he'd no doubt like to forget ... but do you remember it? (1 point)

- a. *Captain Video* b. *Captain Nice* c. *Mr. Terrific* d. *Gemini Man*

11. Col. Steve Austin (Lee Majors) barely survived the crash of his plane in *The Six Million Dollar Man* pilot (1973) -- in fact, he needed a lot of high-tech patching up (and replacing). What new body part(s) didn't Col. Steve Austin receive? (1 point)

- a. a bionic eye b. bionic legs c. a bionic ear d. a bionic arm

12. After *Six Million Dollar Man* had been on the air for three years, ABC put on a spin-off, *The Bionic Woman*, about Austin's former sweetheart Jamie Sommers (Lindsey Wagner), who needed some bionic replacements after: (1 point)

- a. a sky-diving accident c. she fell out a window
b. a train wreck d. a horse trampled her

13. Who lived at 43 Mocking Bird Lane? (1 point)

- a. *The Addams Family* b. *My Favorite Martian* c. *My Mother The Car* d. *The Munsters*

14. *The Addams Family* had a most unusual "member" (of sorts!) -- a living hand in-a-box, which was named: (1 point)

- a. It b. Thing c. Jack d. Lefty

15. Back in 1973, Oscar-winner Sally Field starred in a sitcom about a woman with ESP -- it only lasted one season (unlike *The Flying Nun*, which hung on for three years!), and was called: (1 point)

- a. *ESP* c. *The Girl With Something Extra*
b. *Nanny and the Professor* d. *The Sixth Sense*

16. A sadly short-lived morbid horror anthology of 1961 is still written about and fondly remembered by horror aficionados (those old enough to have seen it); this show (hosted by writer Roald Dahl) ran after *Twilight Zone*, yet still got the ax -- and it was called: (1 point)

- a. *Way Out* c. *Inner Sanctum*
b. *Tales of the Unexpected* d. *Lights Out*

17. One of the best episodes of *Amazing Stories* had to be Richard Matheson's "The Doll" (which garnered an Emmy for star John Lithgow), but that script was a twenty-year-old discard from another horror-fantasy anthology, namely: (1 point)

- a. *Night Gallery* b. *Twilight Zone* c. *Thriller* d. *Outer Limits*

18. Which anthology show, by decree of producer Joseph Stefano, had to feature a monster (alien, human, whatever), nicknamed "the bears," in every episode? (1 point)

- a. *Outer Limits* b. *Thriller* c. *Batman* d. *The Invaders*

19. In 1973, Harlan Ellison created -- and promptly disowned -- a Canadian-made series which only lasted one season. Ellison *did* win a WGA award for "best dramatic-episodic script" for the pilot script "Phoenix Without Ashes," but what was the name of the fantasy-sci-fi series later billed as being "Created By Cordwainer Bird"? (1 point)

- a. *Strange Paradise* b. *The New People* c. *Men into Space* d. *The Starlost*

20. Which actor -- himself a veteran of the original version -- did the occasional narration for the 1980's version of *The Twilight Zone*? (1 point)

- a. Charles Aidman b. Burgess Meredith c. John Carradine d. Jack Klugman

Bonus Question: Since we're on the subject of old and new *Twilight Zones*, which much beloved band of the 1960's and beyond performs the new theme music for the 1980's version of the show? (1 point)



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